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KING
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Porsche 993
Reborn

'80s:

Knight Rider
Lives

'40s:

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ABOVE & BEYOND



12



Knight Stalking

By Zach Bowman

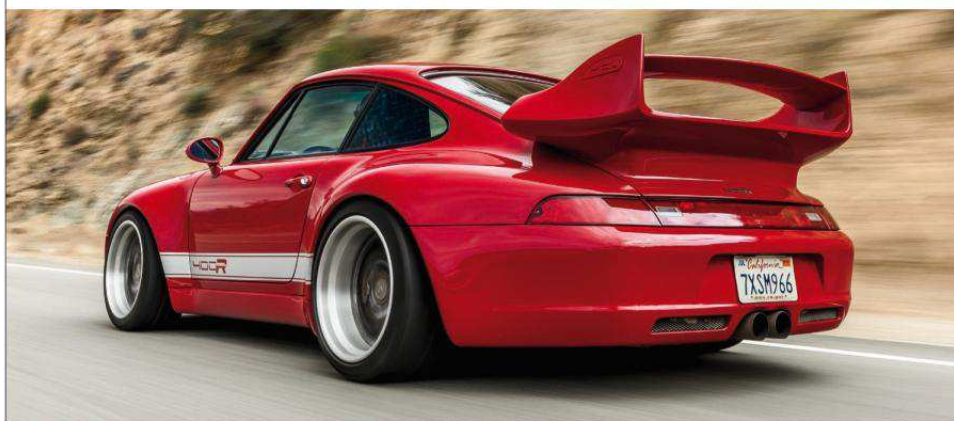
At the crossroads of skill, fandom, and obsession, you'll find **Don Colie** making remarkable **KITT replicas** from scratch. Why from scratch? Because that's the only way to do it just right.

54

Best Corvette—For Now

By Andy Pilgrim

How does Chevy's latest big-power **ZR1** stack up in the pantheon of best Corvettes ever? We take to the track with what's likely to be the last front-engine Corvette to prompt that question.



22

Documenting Il Commendatore

By Jamie Kitman

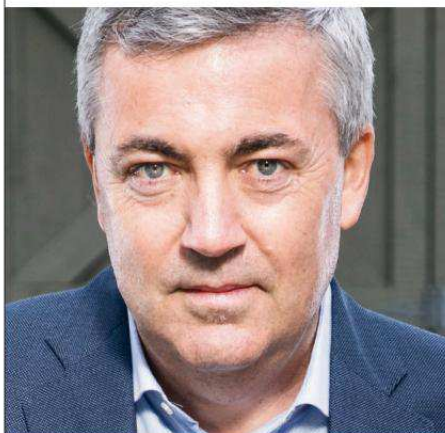
Enzo Ferrari isn't the only interesting man involved in **Luca Dal Monte's** biography of the legendary racing and supercar marque's chief—but he's likely to be even more interesting than you thought.

46

Another Air-Cooled Porsche Rebirth

By Basem Wasef

Can Gunther Werks' 400R, yet another reworked Porsche 911, really add anything worthwhile to today's sports car experience? Does it merit the sacrifice of a near-sacred stock 993? Yes and yes.



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10

Editor's Letter

By Mike Floyd

You don't stop rooting for the home team just because the coach makes a few questionable calls.

32

The Asphalt Jungle

By Arthur St. Antoine

How to get your old-school British off-roader fix in supremely elegant style.

34

Noise, Vibration & Harshness

By Jamie Kitman

The long game of emissions and fuel efficiency remains at odds with the quarterly revenue cycle.



36

Letters

Say it ain't so, Ford. And autonomy isn't even logical.

64

One Special Tucker

By Rory Jurnecka

Seventy years after its birth, **Preston Tucker's personal Tucker 48** has found a fountain of youth thanks to Mark Lieberman.

38

By Design

By Robert Cumberland

Nearly 50 years on, the **Lancia Stratos Zero** concept still looks out of this world.



72

G Code

By Basem Wasef

Tradition and heritage aren't just lip service at Mercedes-Benz, and it shows in the all-new but still very familiar **G-Class**.

78

Going, Going, Gone

By Rory Jurnecka

Buy a massive collection of your favorite cars. Sell them all. Repeat as necessary. This is the story of **John Staluppi**.



88

The Next Generation

By Aaron Gold

In rural Kansas, a small liberal arts college offers the only bachelor's degree in automotive restoration.



98

Catching Up With ...

By Rory Jurnecka

Son of F1 legend Phil Hill, **Derek Hill** is a racer, an entrepreneur, and the **Master of Ceremonies** for the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

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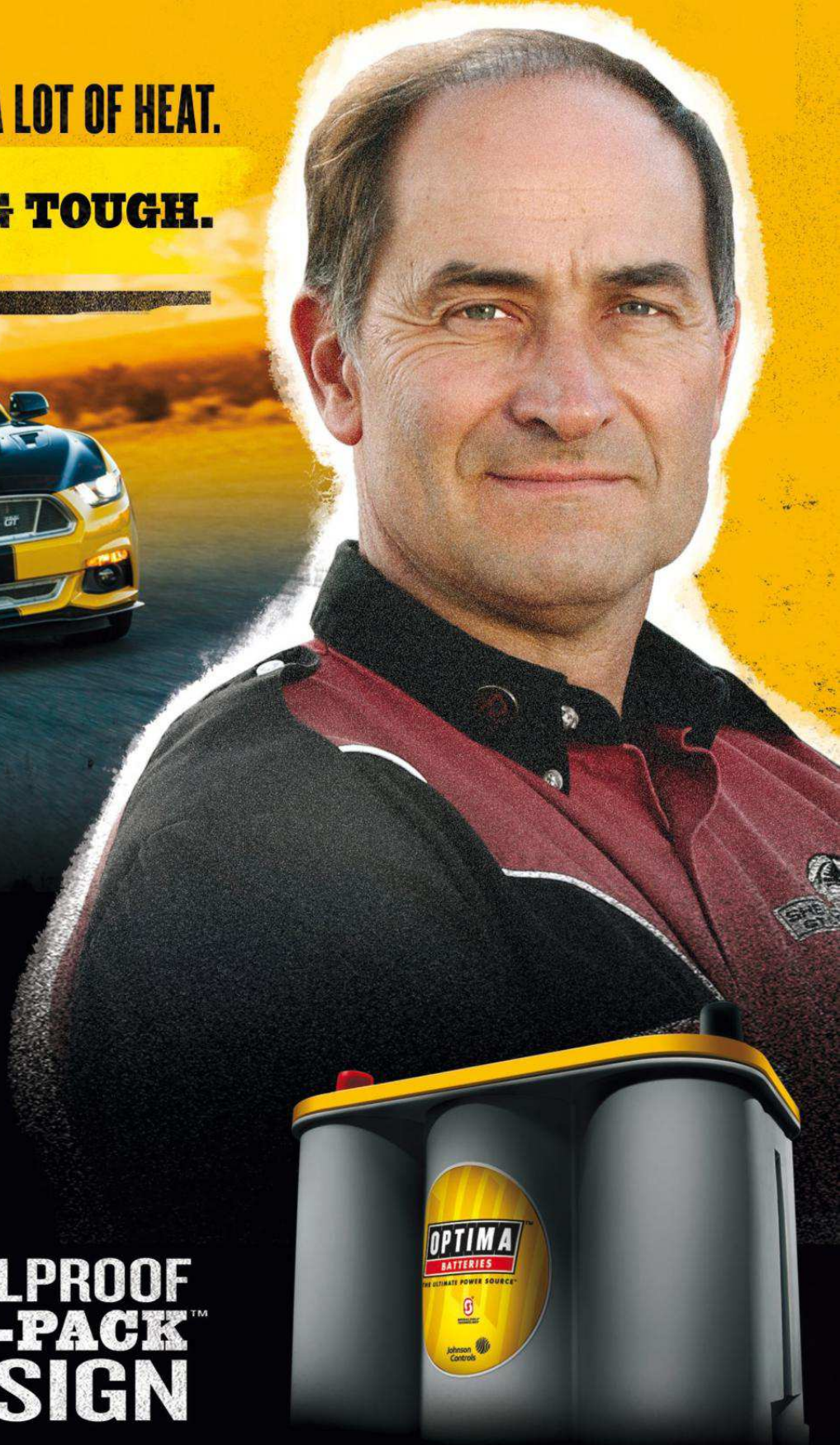
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HOT ROD Garage, Ep. 65

JULY 4

Head 2 Head, Ep. 104

JULY 5

LIVE! 24H Proto Series, 3X3H, Portimao, Portugal - Qualifying
FIA World Rallycross, Sweden

JULY 6

LIVE! 24H Proto Series, 3X3H, Portimao, Portugal - Races 1 & 2
Auto Mundial
Motorsport Mundial

JULY 7

LIVE! 24H GT Series/24H Touring Car Endurance Series, 24H, Portimao, Portugal - Qualifying
LIVE! 24H Proto Series, 3X3H, Portimao, Portugal - Races 3
LIVE! Virgin Australia Supercars, Townsville

JULY 8

LIVE! 24H GT Series/24H Touring Car Endurance Series, 24H, Portimao, Portugal
LIVE! Virgin Australia Supercars, Townsville

JULY 9

Roadkill, Ep. 79

JULY 11

Mobil 1 The Grid, Program 11

JULY 11

Put Up or Shut Up, Ep. 7

JULY 12

British Touring Car Championship, Croft

JULY 13

Auto Mundial
Motorsport Mundial

JULY 14

LIVE! DTM Championship, Zandvoort
LIVE! FIA Formula 3 Championship, Zandvoort

JULY 15

LIVE! FIA Formula 3 Championship, Zandvoort

JULY 16

Roadkill Garage, Ep. 33

JULY 18

Engine Masters, Ep. 37

JULY 20

Auto Mundial
Motorsport Mundial

JULY 21

LIVE! European Le Mans Series - Qualifying, Red Bull Ring, Austria
LIVE! Formula Drift, Monroe, WA
LIVE! Michelin Le Mans Cup - Race 2, Red Bull Ring, Austria
LIVE! Virgin Australia Supercars, Ipswich

JULY 22

LIVE! Blancpain GT Series, Endurance Cup, Spa

LIVE! European Le Mans Series, Red Bull Ring, Austria
LIVE! Michelin Le Mans Cup - Race 1, Red Bull Ring, Austria

LIVE! Virgin Australia Supercars, Ipswich

JULY 23

Dirt Every Day, Ep. 79

JULY 24

Ferrari Challenge Europe, Brno

JULY 25

Mobil 1 The Grid, Program 12

JULY 25

Ignition, Ep. 194

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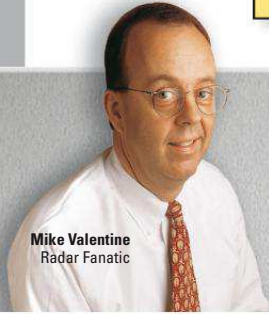
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VOLUME 33, NO. 3

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GOING FURTHER

► **AS SOME OF** you might know, I'm a Detroit homer for life. I've been in California for the better part of 12 years now, but I was born and raised in Motown. I will always root for the home teams: the Lions (yeah, yeah, I know), Pistons, Tigers, Red Wings—and General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler (sorry, I'll never get used to Fiat Chrysler Automobiles).

When things looked bleak for Detroit's Big Three during the Great Recession, it was tough to watch and even tougher to see people rooting for them to fail. In no way was I ignorant of the disastrous decisions, decades of mismanagement, and inferior products that helped lead them to the brink. But I believed they would make good on their second chances. The results have been uneven, but close to a decade later, I firmly believe the automotive landscape is better off with them still a part of it. I believe a world with Corvettes, Mustangs, and Hellcats is an inherently better one.

We are rapidly approaching another reckoning, however. It's a fundamental shift in how humans interact with cars, one that will serve as the ultimate test not only for the traditional domestic automakers but also for every global player. And this time, not everyone will survive.

Ford's recently announced plan to shed most of its sedan production, including the Fusion, Focus, Fiesta, and Taurus, can be viewed in a number of ways. Our Jamie Kitman takes the critical tack in his column this month (hard to believe), scolding Ford for going back on promises of making more fuel-efficient cars and selling out for short-term profit.

In some ways, I believe Kitman is correct. This decision is about the short term, but only in the sense that Ford needs to batten down the hatches, to gather the cash it needs to make it through the next 20 to 30 years. Does anyone at Ford

really believe that selling heavier, less efficient, gasoline-powered trucks and crossovers is the way forward? Because if they do, it's probably best to just go ahead and shut things down now. But I believe the Blue Oval is making the move to help ensure its long-term survival as we enter a new era of mobility.

Like the rest of the industry, Ford has been stung by Tesla's runaway success on Wall Street and by its charismatic CEO, Elon Musk, who has become the pied piper for a battery-electric-powered future. Ford's stock continues to be mired in the low teens. Tesla stock, other than a few hiccups brought on in part by its much-hyped production issues, has remained near or above \$300 all year—and it has been

even bigger at times from a market capitalization standpoint than Ford and GM. It must be extremely discomfiting and disappointing to see it unfold from Dearborn.

But despite some of its legacy production and perception issues, Ford has massive advantages of scale and is investing \$11 billion into future propulsion and technology efforts. That's a hell of a lot of cash. Ford has been on the front end of hybrid tech, which more than one expert believes is the key bridge technology. Ford is also relatively big in China, a market that demands a strong EV game, though it has been struggling there a bit lately.

You can rail against crossovers all you want, but what was Tesla's second vehicle? Yep, a crossover. What's next after the Model 3? I'll give you one guess. But don't get it twisted: I'd much, much rather drive a car like the Focus RS, a Fiesta ST, or a Fusion than an Explorer. Taurus SHO for the win!

For whatever reason, that's not what the rest of the U.S. or the rest of the vehicle-driving world wants. They want a perception of more space, safety, and a higher ride. For now, gas prices make that more easily attainable, and regardless of whether buyers have been pushed in that direction by clever marketing, it's now nigh impossible to put that bus in reverse. Sooner or later, the petroleum house of cards will fall, and when the music stops, where will Ford be?

People freaked out, literally throwing away less fuel-efficient vehicles for tiny gasoline sippers when gas prices spiked well past \$4 per gallon more than a decade ago. If something similar were to happen again and gas suddenly pushes up to \$10 per gallon right as Ford kills off its cars, there will be trouble. But this was a bet on the long game, a way of preparing for the inevitable shift to come. If it's anything other than that, I'll turn it over to Kitman.

The good news, if there is any? A new GT500 is coming! **AM**

● MIKE FLOYD



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THE HOUSE OF KITT

**Don
Colie's**
tireless
commitment
to "Knight
Rider"
replicas





“I took the one-sixteenth plastic Ertl model and measured everything out in millimeters, then I scaled it up 1:1 and sculpted it on a car.”



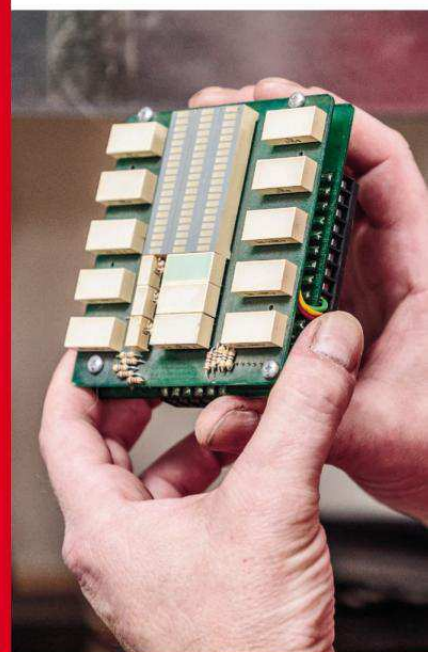
There's no sign announcing Don Colie's shop just south of Roanoke, Virginia. He doesn't need one. The driveway's full of third-generation Pontiac Firebird Trans Ams, all black, all unusually clean, all with a telltale scanner illuminated in the front valance, the red lights sweeping back and forth. The scanner's swishing sound calls up a hundred Friday evenings watching Michael Knight battle bad guys with his intelligent self-driving car. If you lived through the 1980s, you immediately know what you're seeing. This is this house of KITT.

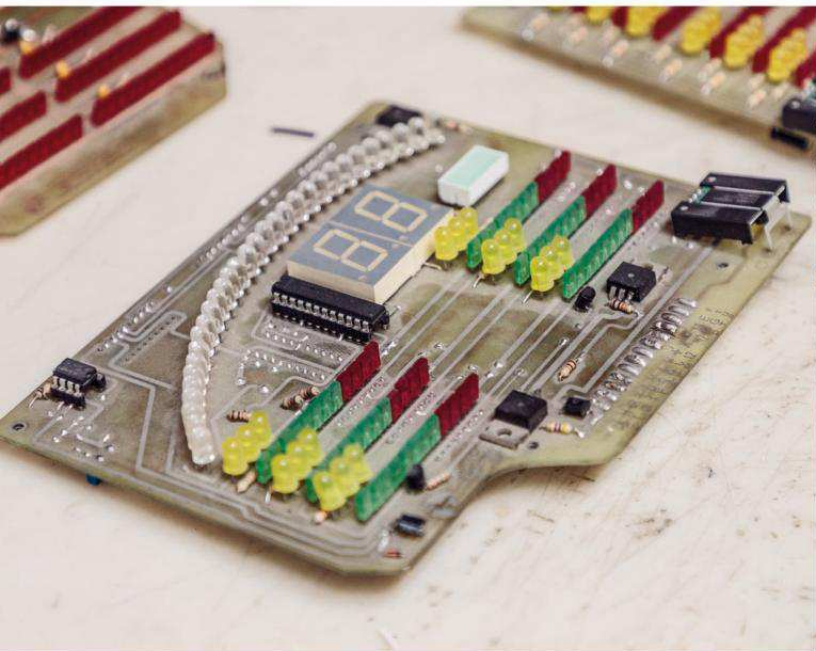
Colie's been building "Knight Rider" replica parts and vehicles for 20 years, fabricating everything you need to turn a 1982-1992 Firebird into the Knight Industries Two Thousand. It's too simple to say that's the only thing his company, Advanced Designs in Automotive Technology, does. The one-bay shop off a country two-lane is a full restoration and prop production house, all helmed by one man; fiberglass, electronics, paint, and interior work fall under his domain.

It's hard to pin down exactly where Colie got started. He mocked up his first KITT dash in high school for a project, assembling an instrument panel from 2-inch furring strips, bits of wood paneling, and poster board. After graduation, he bought a 1982 Firebird Trans Am of his own and set about building the real thing, or as close as he could come.

"The very first dash I built was kind of my interpretation," he said. "I was pulling everything off of a VCR, freeze-framing it. I located what type of LED they used, got the measurements for it, and then multiplied that so I'd know how long each bar graph was. Then I would take that measurement of a single LED and see how many I could fit between the rows so I would know how to space them. That gave me a general description of how big to make the overall display board."

Years later, Colie met a friend who was close with original KITT designer Michael Scheffe, who generously lent him a set of schematics. Scheffe was the mind behind a number of famous vehicles from TV







Mark Murdock's One-TV KITT is as close to show-correct as possible. He uses a KITT app to allow the car to "speak," though a true voice recognition program is the next upgrade.

and film, including Doc Brown's time-traveling DeLorean from the "Back to the Future" saga.

Colie spent his early 20s working first in sales then in production at a prosthetics company, all the while modifying his own car. It wasn't until he made his first bumper that he realized he might be able to make a full-time go of building "Knight Rider" replica parts.

"I took the one-sixteenth plastic Ertl model and measured everything out in millimeters," he said. "Then I scaled it up 1:1 and sculpted it on a car."

He says this was the first truly accurate, show-quality reproduction bumper. Although there were other pieces floating around, some of which had been made from original molds, they were rough. These were props designed to look great whipping through an action shot, not sitting at a car show. This was in the late '90s, years after the last "Knight Rider" episode and in the early days of the internet. When Colie began sharing photos of his car on a replica enthusiast website, he received a flood of requests asking him to build individual pieces. A business was born.

Now 48, Colie has perfected his craft. He does everything in-house, forming fiberglass bumpers, dashes,

consoles, and switch pods for both the first version of the car and the final version used in season four. He also builds KITT's unique steering wheel from scratch using a two-part urethane foam. Like all great fandom, the "Knight Rider" universe has its own language. Early cars are "Two-TV" models, so named for the two screens mounted in the dash. They also feature six foglights mounted in

the lower valance. Later cars use four foglights and only have one screen in the dash. They are predictably referred to as "One-TVs," which Colie favors for the cleaner design.

But the fiberglass and foam are a small part of what makes these cars special. A surprising number of the gauges and readouts work, including speedometer, tachometer, odometer, trip



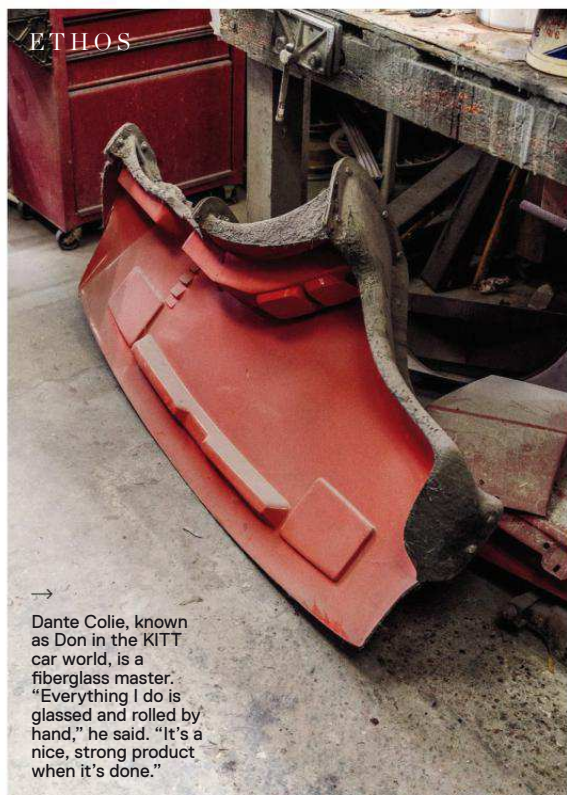
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→ Dante Colie, known as Don in the KITT car world, is a fiberglass master. "Everything I do is glassed and rolled by hand," he said. "It's a nice, strong product when it's done."



meter, oil pressure, water temperature, and estimated range. Colie builds his own printed circuit boards, starting with big, blank sheets of copper and finishing with fully populated boards; he solders each diode and processor by hand. Each board might take him up to two days to complete, and each dash uses a stack of them.

"By using all my own techniques, if I want to update something, I can just go to the computer, make my updates, and come out with a fresh board," he said. "Every single board I make, I can make again a year later, two years later, or 20 years later. I have everything there that it takes to do it."

Helpful, given that his replicas come with a warranty.

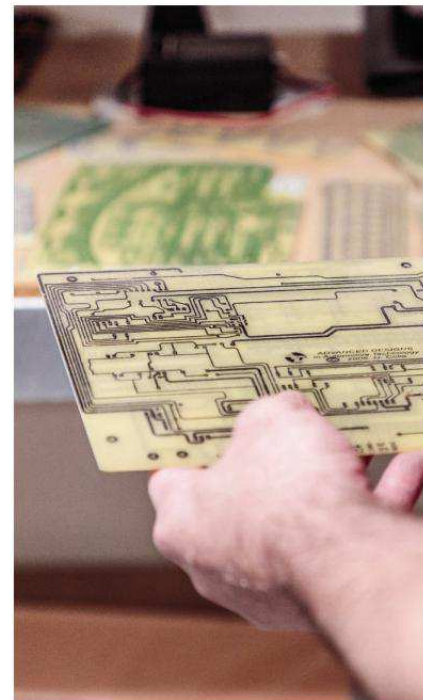
Colie invited two of his customers to join us for our visit. Mark Murdock and his wife, Melissa, drove their 1985 One-TV car up from Raleigh, North Carolina, and Chad Pulliam came north from Fayetteville, North Carolina, in his 1990 Two-TV machine. Pulliam's a big guy hiding behind mirrored shades, and it's easy to take his shyness for brusqueness. But he warms up, revealing a broad laugh once we start talking about the car and the show. His KITT was a father-son project that began eight years ago.

Although any third-generation Trans Am can serve as a donor for a KITT build, later cars first have to be backdated to 1982 specification before any further modifications can be made. Pulliam isn't a stickler for show accuracy, but it's clear he adores his

KITT. It's one of three TV cars he owns; he also has a General Lee replica and a KARR, KITT's evil twin.

For Murdock, his KITT is the only one he's ever wanted. A few years back, an on-the-job accident, resulting in multiple rounds of surgeries on both shoulders, brought his 32-year EMS career to an end.

"The doctor says, 'You'll never work again. You're on a 30-pound weight-lifting restriction for the rest of your life,'" he said. "I told my wife, 'I'm suffering through surgery after surgery. I want something out of this. I've always wanted a KITT, so when I get the settlement, I'm going to take part of that money and buy one.' And I did it."



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2019 Avalon Touring shown with options in Wind Chill Pearl (extra-cost color) with available Advanced Safety Package. ©2018 Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.



But of all the things, why this? Why an aging, third-generation Trans Am with a body makeover and a new dash? Murdock says part of it runs back to his childhood, when he saw a KITT replica at a car show and had the chance to sit behind the wheel. But now, it's about sharing the joy with other people.

"A lot of people love the show and love the car," Murdock said. "It makes me happy to see them happy and to relive their childhood. Everybody's got to get a picture."

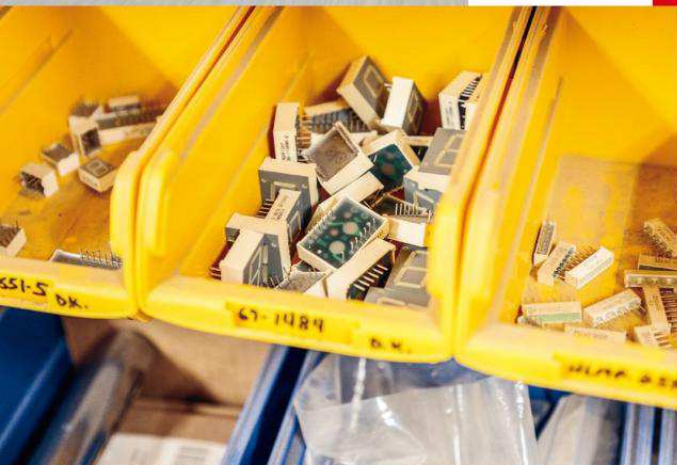
To that end, Murdock has made certain his car is 100 percent TV-correct, right down to the missing Pontiac arrowheads on the hubcaps. Both his car and Pulliam's were partially completed when they came to Colie for interior work.

Colie will do turnkey conversions, starting at \$55,000. The work is extensive and starts with a near-complete disassembly. It's one part conversion, one part restoration, and he says the work can be done in six to 12 months depending on the donor's condition.





→ Every electronic component that Don Colie makes comes through this tidy solder bench. A single circuit board could take him two days to complete.



Colie's devotion is astonishing to see, a faithfulness to functionality and the original source material that likely explains why he's been able to make a living at this. Wandering around his shop, looking at the bins of resistors and switches, it's clear he could have done anything he wanted with his life. Everything he does here, he taught himself. In another life, he could have helped put men on Mars, ushered in our autonomous future, or simply made a tidy fortune building props in Hollywood. Instead, he dedicated his adult life to "Knight Rider." When asked why, he doesn't have a ready answer, talking around the question, explaining the steps that led him here rather than the motivations behind them.

Watching "Knight Rider" now, 32 years after the series finale first aired, it's difficult to understand. The show is riddled with cheesy effects, questionable plot lines, and gimmicky stunts. Young David Hasselhoff comes across more as an obtuse goofball than a handsome man of mystery. It takes some effort to look past all that, to see what sits at the show's core. It's the same thing that hangs at the center of all good science fiction: genuine optimism. It's the belief that with a little cleverness and the right car, there's nothing we can't overcome, no situation so bleak or so dire that we can't triumph in the end. Who wouldn't want to spend their days keeping that alive? **AM**





by JAMIE KITMAN
photography by DANIEL BYRNE

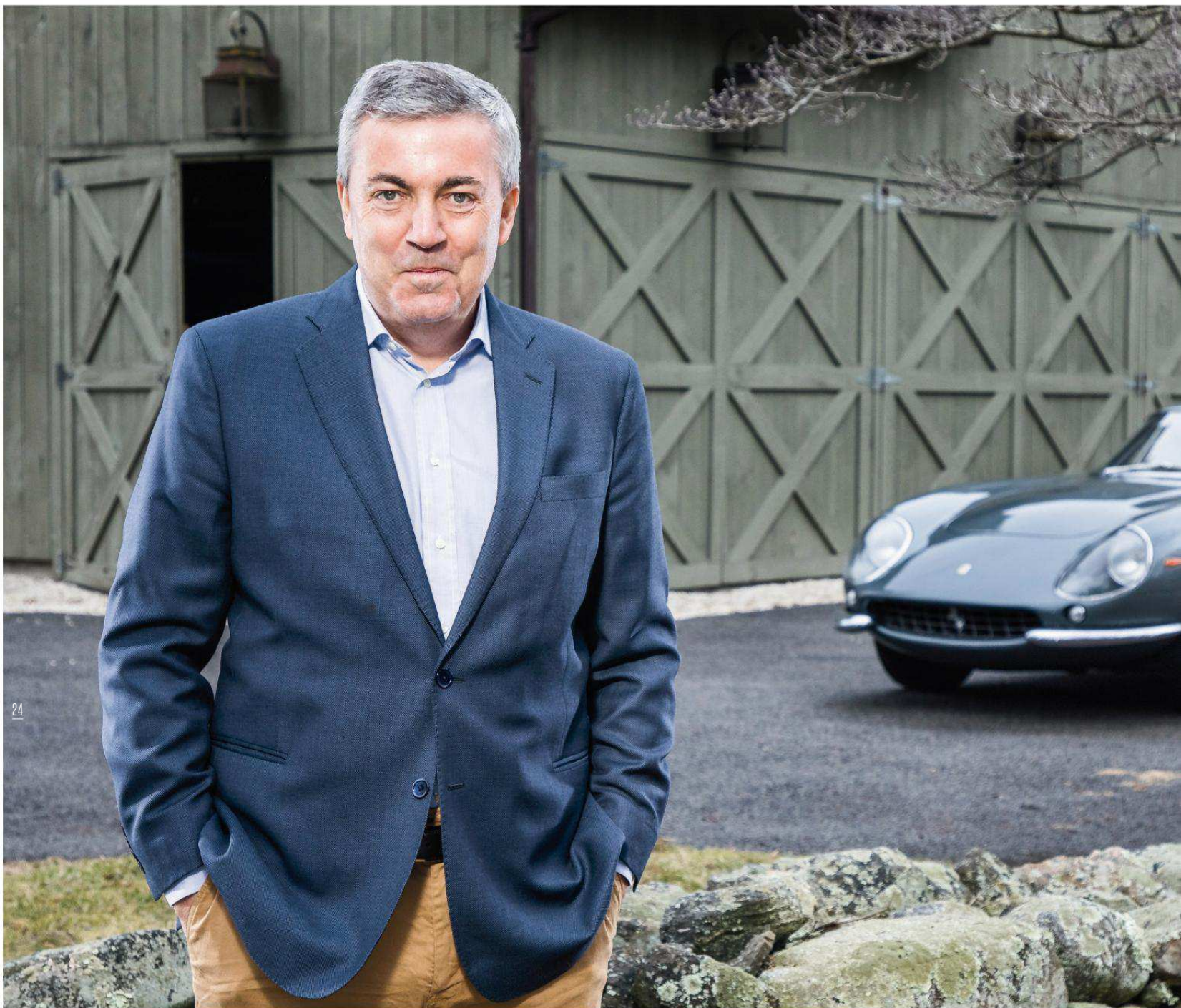
ON

ENZO'S

TRAIL



Luca Dal Monte's new Ferrari biography is a must-read, and the author is a story of his own



24

LUCA DAL MONTE is thoroughly Italian. Born and raised in Cremona, home of Stradivari, in the Lombardy region of northern Italy by the left bank of the River Po. Lives today in Milan. Ran press operations for Ferrari and Maserati, two of the most essential, essentially Italian marques. He's also written several books, including a novel called *La Scuderia* and, most recently, *Ferrari Rex*, a weighty yet wonderfully colorful biography of Enzo Ferrari. There's a fair chance it will become an Italian miniseries.

Yet, intriguingly, 55-year-old Dal Monte credits America—where *Ferrari Rex* is only just now available in English and retitled as *Enzo Ferrari: Power, Politics, and the Making of an Automotive Empire*—for his success.



On a U.S. press tour, Dal Monte has come to meet us at Dominick European Car Repair, a mecca for all things old-car Italian, in White Plains, New York. We're meant to drive off in a rare and valuable 1966 Ferrari 275 GTB belonging to a generous customer, an early-production long-nose model with several unique details and a value in excess of \$3 million. I offer Dal Monte the first drive, but eyeing the steady drizzle of a cold Westchester morning along with some spirited displays of local driving skill outside the garage, he declines: "Not today."

I, however, don't have to be asked twice to drive the first 275 GTB I've ever sat in. Still, determined to remain on task, I ask Dal Monte, "What is it about you and America?"



↑
 “After 30 years, there was really nothing I could add to my job profile. ... Writing had become my second profession. You reach a point when you’re 50 and say, ‘I’d rather do it today than wait any longer.’”
 ↓



“I’ve always been fascinated with you guys,” he says. “I belong to the Race to the Moon generation. I remember watching the Apollo launches and splashdowns on TV, dreaming of one day going to the U.S.”

“I also belong to the post-JFK generation. My mom and dad remember to this day where they were when they heard the news of JFK’s assassination. I know all Americans [of a certain age] do, but in Italy it’s more rare. Perhaps as a consequence of this, I developed an interest, which became love and then passion, for U.S. politics and history.”

Dal Monte admits to a teenage predilection for U.S. sitcoms like “Happy Days.” “And then, I mean, you go back to ‘The Brady Bunch’ in the early ’70s, that was [American] high school at its best!” he says. He proudly says that this, along with understanding parents and an unlikely exchange program between Cremona and Owensboro, Kentucky, brought him to America for his senior year of high school. He liked it so much he decided to stay for college at the University of Kentucky, studying political science and American history while writing for the *Kentucky Kernel*, the school’s newspaper. His children attend American universities, and American politics remains his favorite subject. As evidence, he has an extensive collection of American political memorabilia, including more than 600 buttons, posters, and convention flyers dating as far back as 1896.

After his U.S. schooling, though, it was back to Italy for compulsory military duty. Dal Monte cast around for journalism jobs upon completing his service and applied to Peugeot on a lark. He wound up landing a plum assignment in the French automaker’s Italian press office. With no experience, he chalked up this early career success to the employer appeal of his English language skill and firsthand knowledge of America. Ditto Toyota, which hired him a few



years later to head the press effort for its newly established Italian operation, and then Ferrari, which sent Dal Monte back to the U.S. in New Jersey to run its North American press office. He then helped relaunch Maserati in the States before returning to Italy to oversee the company's worldwide press operations.

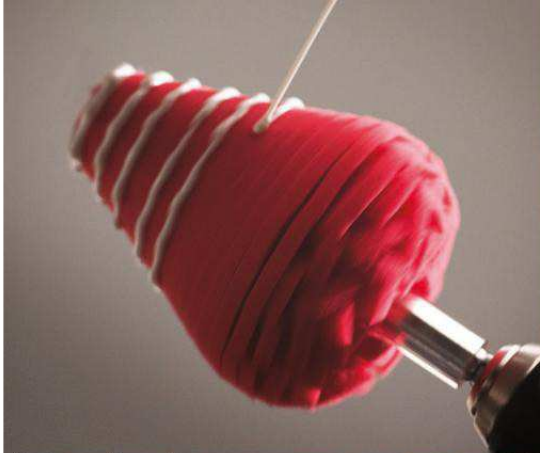
In Dal Monte's view, the American connection led to jobs that capped his career. They also put him in a position to gain enhanced access to relevant Ferrari and Alfa Romeo documents, making a burgeoning historian's job easier. The Enzo Ferrari tome joins a growing list of works that includes overviews of Ferrari cars and racing, a 100-year history of Maserati, and *La Scuderia*, a spy and love story set against a 1930s racing backdrop. As for the Ferrari biography, the Italian press has hailed it as the most scholarly and deeply researched biography of Il Commendatore yet, of the admittedly few that have been written.

While living in Ferrari's Modena heartland during his tenure at Maserati, Dal Monte was surrounded by older folk who had worked with Enzo. He often met them after work following initial interviews, and they filled in details and remembered things they had not in earlier conversations. His position with Maserati gave him access to a wide range of primary materials, too. "One of the greatest assets in my research was the Alfa Romeo archive in Arese, near Milan," he says. There Dal Monte found Enzo Ferrari's personnel file from when he managed Alfa's race team. It documented Ferrari's importance to the great Italian racing power in the inter-war period as well as elements of his financial acuity. "Much like a Broadway producer, he used other people's money to finance his endeavors," Dal Monte points out. His was a kind of scholarly curiosity and deep-dive research not always associated with the public relations profession.





Luca Dal Monte tours New York's Westchester County in a 275 GTB long nose, a fitting symbol for the life of his subject, the man who lent his name to what has become one of the world's most valuable luxury brands. A very early-production long nose, this 1967 transition model shares features with earlier short nose and later long nose production, but it has some unique aspects, too.



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“There are two kinds of PR people: those who come from marketing and those who come from journalism,” Dal Monte says. He sees himself in the latter camp; though his own experience in traditional journalism was slight, his formative years in college forever shaped his perspective. Facts, analysis, and color, not marketing fluff, became his focus. Perhaps inevitably, in 2015, he left PR for good.

“After 30 years in a worldwide position, there was really nothing I could add to my job profile, I guess,” he reflects. “And in the meantime, writing had become my second profession. You reach a point when you’re 50 and say, ‘I’d rather do it today than wait any longer.’”

Past employment with Ferrari notwithstanding, Dal Monte’s eight years of research into one of Italy’s most famous figures has not resulted in a hagiography. It contradicts Ferrari’s own 1962 autobiography, for instance, by including the story of how, long before he ran Alfa’s winning race team or set up a successful car company, the young Ferrari was failing at running his own first business, a coachworks. In fact, the man didn’t build his first Ferrari car until he was 49, after World War II, which ought to lend hope and inspiration to late bloomers everywhere. Dal Monte’s opus also runs down Ferrari’s serial infidelity to his wife, though he sees its roots in her lifelong depression and anxiety, which made her pull away from him. “He needed someone,” the writer says.

Of course, all of Italy forgave and continues to forgive Ferrari for his transgressions. “If you grew up in Italy in the ’70s, Enzo Ferrari was a towering figure,” Dal Monte explains. “There was the Pope, and then there was Enzo. I am not kidding; by the mid-’70s, Enzo had reached a demigod dimension. He was the Grand Old Man not just of motor racing but of the country. You could even hear him call into some of the early TV automotive/motor racing shows and speak—to the point of shouting—with the talk show host in order to defend his cars and his drivers. More the cars than the drivers, actually. He was everywhere.

“When I did the research for my book, I was able to scientifically confirm what I remembered from those days: There was hardly a day in which national newspapers did not have a story on Enzo. It was inevitable, when discussing his cars, races, or drivers: You must mention or quote him.”





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Dal Monte remembers as a teenager in the late '70s taking an hourlong train ride to Modena early one morning with his brother, just to catch a glimpse of Ferrari having his morning shave at a barbershop. Ferrari stared out at them staring in at him and smiled.

"I had wanted to write a book on him for a long, long time," Dal Monte says. "But I didn't want it to be a book like all the others. I wanted to tell more. More of the man, and of the men and women around him. When I was hired at Ferrari, I gained access not just to archives but to people. And it was at that point I realized that if I really put my mind at it, it could be possible.

"Of course, I love cars, especially sports cars. But my fascination with Enzo went and still goes far beyond that. It was his lifelong struggle to succeed, to become someone, to beat the odds, to go down in history that intrigued me. In so many ways, Enzo was like [Ronald] Reagan: a man with no particular specific qualities that made it big. There's a beautiful book on Reagan whose subtitle reads, 'How an ordinary man became an extraordinary leader.' In my opinion, that applies to Enzo Ferrari as well: 'How an ordinary man became an automotive giant.'" **AM**





↑
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OLD RUSH



→ **FOR ANYONE ALIVE** “way back when,” how could you possibly forget 1995? Dean Martin died, and never again did the moon in the sky look like a big pizza pie. Starbucks unveiled the frozen Frappuccino—prompting Martin to remark, “Thank God I’m dead.” And O.J. Simpson performed one of history’s greatest-ever feats of magic by trying on a pair of ill-fitting leather gloves and instantly transforming a mound of DNA evidence into a golf cart.

To tell the truth, though, 1995 was pretty much lost way back in the cobwebs of my cerebellum—until, that is, I recently climbed behind the wheel

of a circa-1995 long-wheelbase Range Rover Classic by the folks at E.C.D. Automotive Design of Kissimmee, Florida. Some of you might know this crew as East Coast Defenders, but given its new design studio in Malibu, California, and the recent addition of Range Rovers to the formerly exclusive lineup of Defender 90s and 110s, the company has changed its moniker. The corporate mission remains the same, though: Customers choose the Land Rover they desire (up through the 1997 year, the last for U.S.-bound Defenders) and select the drivetrain, wheels, and almost any exterior and interior fitments they wish. Then, after about a year of painstaking ground-up restoration and handiwork, E.C.D. will deliver what’s essentially a brand-new, 20-plus-year-old vehicle.

“Back in England, we grew up around MGs, Minis, and Rovers, always tinkering with them,” says Tom Humble, one of three partners—along with his brother Elliot and friend Scott Wallace—who founded E.C.D. in the U.S. back in 2013. “But when I moved to the States about six years ago, I brought two Defenders with me. I ended up putting them on eBay, and they sold very quickly. Then one night not long after, I was talking Defenders with

THE

ASPHALT

AJ

JUNGLE

ILLUSTRATION
by
TIM
MARRS

Arthur St. Antoine

Scott, and the idea for the company sort of just started from there.” In the years since, E.C.D. has sold more than 150 of its custom rigs.

“In Los Angeles you can go to a restaurant and find 15 Mercedes G-Wagens parked out front,” Wallace says. “Our customers want something unique and exclusive. They want to be able to drive from Kissimmee to L.A. without seeing themselves once.”

E.C.D.’s new Rover Classic comes in three editions—Retro, Pursuit, and Pinnacle—and can be customized with an almost infinite number of options. In a sea of modern Range Rovers, the beautifully presented Classic Pinnacle Edition I drove around L.A. for a few days stopped traffic wherever I went. “Damn, I always wanted one of those,” one admirer said. “You keep yours in such great shape!” The light was about to turn green, so I just said, “Thanks.”

Mind you, stepping back to the future costs big. The top-line RRC Pinnacle starts at \$169,995. But for that princely sum you get a stately 4x4 refurbished to better-than-new condition, a Chevy 6.2-liter V-8 crate motor mounted to a six-speed auto, upgraded brakes and suspension, LED lighting all around, and a huge, sumptuously appointed interior dressed in premium Spinneybeck leather—all detailed to your exact specifications.

I road-tested the Classic when it was new back in the mid-1990s, and those memories roared back strong as I cruised around L.A. Yes, the E.C.D. Rover may be modernized, but many of the original’s charms—some might call them “quirks”—remain. The steering feels like you’re trying to turn a water buffalo. The “safari-optimized” seating position is conspicuously high—I recall passengers in the old days fretting through turns: “Is this thing going to tip over?” The window frames are as thin as O.J.’s alibis, but the gaps in the various body panels are wide enough to swallow fingers.

None of that detracts from the old-school pleasures of piloting this truck, though. With 430 horsepower on tap, the LS3-powered Classic accelerates with ease. The leather-lined cabin looks—and smells—divine. Said my wife when she climbed aboard: “This interior makes me want to smoke a cigar.” Rear-seat accommodations are limolike. And should you wish to risk creosote-bush scratches on your \$170K toy, the Classic will happily crawl anywhere in Death Valley you’d care to go.

After a few days behind the wheel, I realized two things I especially liked about the E.C.D. RR Classic: (1) driving it made me feel 20 years younger, and (2) whenever I turned on the radio, I did not hear “Macarena.” **AM**

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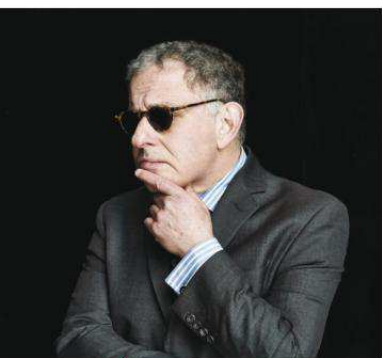


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FORD HAS A “BETTER” IDEA



→ **YOU COULD WRITE** a book filled with all the things someone might reasonably think, say, or splutter about Ford's recent decision to largely abandon the North American passenger car market. In late April, Ford's new CEO, Jim Hackett, informed the financial community that, come 2020, almost 90 percent of Ford's North American portfolio will consist of trucks and utility and commercial vehicles. There is room here to touch on only a few concerns this development rains down upon us. Farewell Fusion, Focus, Fiesta, and Taurus, hello things taller, wider, and most likely heavier.

How did this happen, and why? Cheap gas is the obvious culprit—like magic, it made thirsty vehicles plausible again, and for many carmakers, this makes America great again. They can get back to selling bigger trucks, SUVs, and crossovers, which are more profitable endeavors. But we know how this roller-coaster ride winds up.

Congress would have been wise to tax gasoline more heavily when gas was cheap—to lock in the national move toward more fuel-efficient vehicles that was picking up steam as America came out of recession. But Congress didn't consider it for a minute, and automakers preferred selling SUVs as they had for decades before briefly renouncing them. Then, as now, they charged more for SUVs and crossovers, which cost them very little if any more to make than ordinary cars.

Hard to recall, but gas mileage improvements were happening in this country. Then, after years of cheap gas, the national fuel economy stopped improving in 2017. This is what government and industry and much of the citizenry said we weren't going to do again. Think back to 2008-09 and how different the mood was when federal bailouts for GM and FCA

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and a \$5.9 billion loan to Ford from the U.S. Department of Energy spawned a generation of more fuel-efficient powertrains. Ford and others apologized for their environmental profligacy, acknowledging their own roles in their financial troubles and the lack of fuel-efficient vehicles they had to offer in times of high gas prices. They testified there was nothing they wanted to do more than get away from over-reliance on SUV profits, to build a new generation of sedans and passenger vehicles while getting a big leg up on this electric car thing.

Today we understand this position as an aberration or bout of temporary insanity, a momentary detour from their long-term strategy for America, which is to make more money short-term selling as many of the biggest cars as they can get away with. The prospect of an imminent autonomous, ride-sharing, sales-collapse future has them running scared today, convinced they need to bank cash while they can. Like the rest of us, Detroit wonders how soon the gravy train is going to dry up. Ford President of Global Markets Jim Farley burnished Hackett's 90 percent not-cars promise to investors by allowing that the company was also eager to build more “authentic off-roaders.” This despite almost no one ever going off-road.

This brings us to the question of the deeply psychological place high-riding SUVs, trucks, and crossovers occupy in the human psyche.

**CHEAP GAS IS THE
OBVIOUS CULPRIT—
LIKE MAGIC, IT MADE
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AND FOR MANY
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MAKES AMERICA
GREAT AGAIN.**

Many people like them. But it isn't like automakers haven't been trying their hardest to sell them, either, marketing and talking up the jacked-up lifestyle to the cumulative tune of tens of billions. When the industry says the customer decides where the market goes, that's not the whole truth.

In addition, there was another element to Ford's decision to administer euthanasia to its family sedan lines in its 115th year.

Just two years ago, Ford boasted it had been named Interbrand's best global green brand. But something happened on the way to the love-in:

Ford and the rest of the industry bumped into President Donald Trump, who created a safe space for the bigly regulated to get back in touch with their biggest, baddest selves. Along with other manufacturers, Ford lobbied the newly receptive government of a rule-burner-in-chief to overturn the upgraded (but still imperfect) Obama-era CAFE and emissions standards for 2025, which they gleefully did. The industry, which had agreed to the rules under much humbled circumstances, went back on its word. Although it was on target to meet tougher standards, it saw junkie daylight and a path back to its old, dangerous habits. Like many an addict before it, it went right back in.

Today Ford promises to take further advantage of a situation it was already taking liberal advantage of by selling even more trucks and crossovers with big footprints, which entitle them, under the rules (thanks, Obama!), to get lousier fuel economy and emit more than smaller vehicles. This was the poison pill planted in the 2009 regulations. Ford is not alone. GM sold Opel, its most convincing center of small car excellence, last year. So too FCA, which shuttered the Dart and Chrysler 200 production lines. Trucks and crossovers are set to take these almost-brand-new cars' place, with the company's compact and midsize passenger car lines forever cast into space.

Bailing on cars and failing to allocate adequate development money to carry these machines through their life cycles with dignity, all three of America's heritage carmakers have walked away from what had once been their lifeblood and—even in their darkest days—a big part of who they were.

Instead, we have Ford's new boss telling analysts, "We're going to feed the healthy parts of our business and deal decisively with the parts that destroy value." Imagine that: the great American family sedan now a value

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destroyer in the eyes of America's oldest car company. Ousted Ford CEO Mark Fields was making all the modern noises and many of the newfangled investments the market indicated it wanted in the face of the futurescape that excites it so much. But it made no difference to Ford's share prices. Last May, Fields was canned, and Hackett was in. But Hackett's big idea—big spending cuts, including savings from the passenger car trapdoor, totaling \$25 billion—hasn't moved the market, either. Nor has a planned \$11 billion spend on electric cars.

Meanwhile, it's as if Ford convinced itself it couldn't make money off sedans, hatchbacks, or wagons. This is the fight Ford lost in the '70s, came back to in the '80s with the Taurus, gave up again in the '90s, then came back to fight harder once more with fine cars like the Fusion and Focus. But now Ford is quitting cars entirely (except for the Mustang and a rugged Focus variant). The We Can Do Everything swagger the American car industry personified for a century is truly gone. In its place, the fat man who can't be bothered to bend over to pick up a dollar bill from the sidewalk because he's worried about his health. **AM**



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→ I learned to drive a stick at the age of 8, and it seemed such a magical experience to me. These days there are still options for people who want to shift gears and toss their machine into a corner or two on their way to work. Maybe you choose the back way to the grocery store for a little blast of excitement. The goal of better fuel economy with good power has yielded some downright fun cars; turbos are now common, and “quick and sporty” can also get good mileage when you don’t bury the gas pedal. A heel-toe downshift coming into a set of esses in a nimble car is a little slice of heaven for me, which is why I’m so upset to hear Ford is only going to have two cars by 2020. Ford’s cars have always been for the masses, save for a few special Mustangs, but lately I thought its cars were in a good place: ST, SHO, RS. I guess I will soon have only memories of when Ford made a fun selection of driver’s cars.

36

MATT NEUBAUER
Pinedale, Wyoming

WELCOME TO THE MATRIX

There is a multibillion-dollar industry in video gaming and virtual reality. The grail of virtual reality is increased tactile and experiential sensations to best simulate the control of (substituted) reality for the user. Meanwhile, the goal of autonomous vehicles is to improve efficiency in transportation while eliminating the necessity for a user to control and derive feedback from external reality. Will that allow us more time to purchase substitute

virtual reality experiences? If so, where is the efficiency in that? Is it all about in-vehicle marketing? When is it counterproductive to our personal autonomy? Creating improved efficiency in traffic flow and vehicle movement through flexibility, crash avoidance, routing, interconnectivity, swarming, and streaming emulations should be a more rewarding, useful, and desirable goal for time-challenged self-drivers than a bland dystopian autonomous A-to-B transport experience.

RICHARD DIETZEN
El Dorado, Arkansas

The advent of fully autonomous cars will usher in an age where the government and insurance companies can tell us when and where we can drive and will give them the ability to turn off our choices with the simple push of a button. You can bank on it. No longer will we be able to take a Sunday drive to nowhere through the backwoods or quickly turn around to go back and see the oddity we just passed. Exploration and purposely getting lost will become things of the past. The entire car culture, including customizers, parts stores, and media offerings like yours, will vanish, as will many jobs related to the automobile industry. That all sucks.

JAMES DeLEO
Tampa, Florida

JETTA MUSINGS

I enjoyed Cumberland’s analysis of the new Volkswagen Jetta (“By Design,” May) but disagree with one comment: “That early connection with Turin flowered for VW with the brilliant Giorgetto Giugiaro design for the Golf in the early ’70s.” The Golf was a great design and a commercial success, but the Giugiaro-designed Mk 1 Scirocco was much more striking. I owned two Mk 1 Sciroccos and still love its design.

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I just finished reading the Klaus Bischoff interview in the May issue. In Silicon Valley, prior to making an investment in a startup company, we often ask the employees if they are “eating their own dog food,” meaning, are they/their associates using the solution they’ve created? Herr Bischoff is obviously choking it down. The Jetta debadged could be a Honda, a Toyota, a Chrysler, or any of an assortment of brands. It defines bland. On top of that, my wife and I both need new cars this year. We decided to put VW and all its subsidiaries in the penalty box for the next 10 years. When you lose our trust in your company (via the clean diesel issue), all you can do is a mea culpa (still waiting) and take your medicine (10 years). Anyone want a used high-mileage Porsche 911 and Audi Q7 at reasonable price?

G. CRAIG VACHON
Aptos, California

MORE ON MODEL 3

I usually try to find something good on a new vehicle, but this Tesla Model 3 is not my idea of a well-thought-out plan. The instrument panel is a total afterthought. It looks like someone left their laptop open and bolted it on. For the money spent for this car, the Chevrolet Volt is much easier on the eyes than Tesla’s toy. As for the exterior, well, if that’s the Design of the Year, then we are in trouble. Just makes me like my ’17 Mustang EcoBoost all the more.

GARY MOORE
Tucson, Arizona

One last take on the Tesla Model 3 featured on your March/April cover: When I first saw the head-on photo of the car, it looked familiar. I couldn’t quite put my finger on what it was, but it finally hit me. From that front view, if you replace the slanted headlights with round ones, you’ve got a duplicate of Renault’s 1960s answer to the VW Karmann Ghia—a Renault Caravelle.

BOB FLOCKE
Wimberley, Texas

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LANCIA STRATOS ZERO

photography by EVAN KLEIN

38

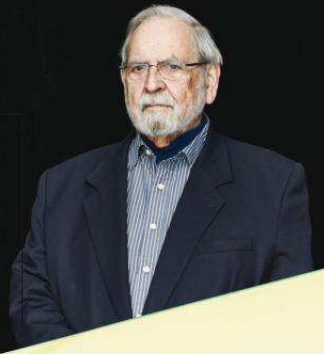


► **TRUE CONCEPT CARS** from mainstream manufacturers—as opposed to one-off, individually commissioned designs on commercially available chassis, as was common practice in the '20s and '30s—are a relatively rare phenomenon. Starting with Harley Earl's Buick Y-Job in 1939 and Chrysler's Alex Tremulis' Thunderbolt soon after, nothing much more happened until 1951, when Earl's Le Sabre and the Buick XP-300 that shared its chassis and mechanical elements appeared. Since then, a veritable flood of such cars have appeared, but those "concepts" have primarily been means to suggest near-future production models, nothing more, and certainly, most have been essentially rather conventional.

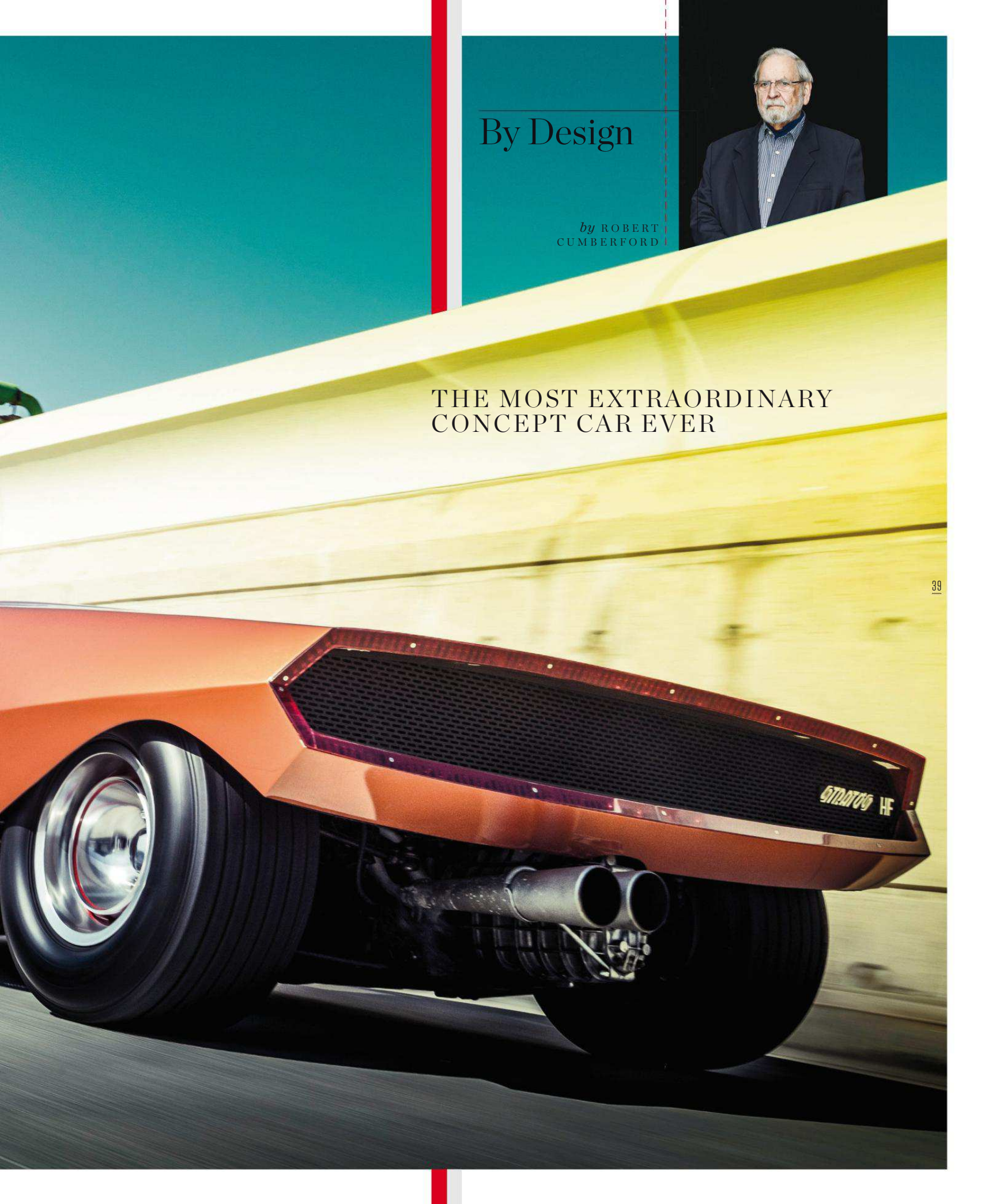


By Design

by ROBERT
CUMBERFORD



THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY
CONCEPT CAR EVER



1

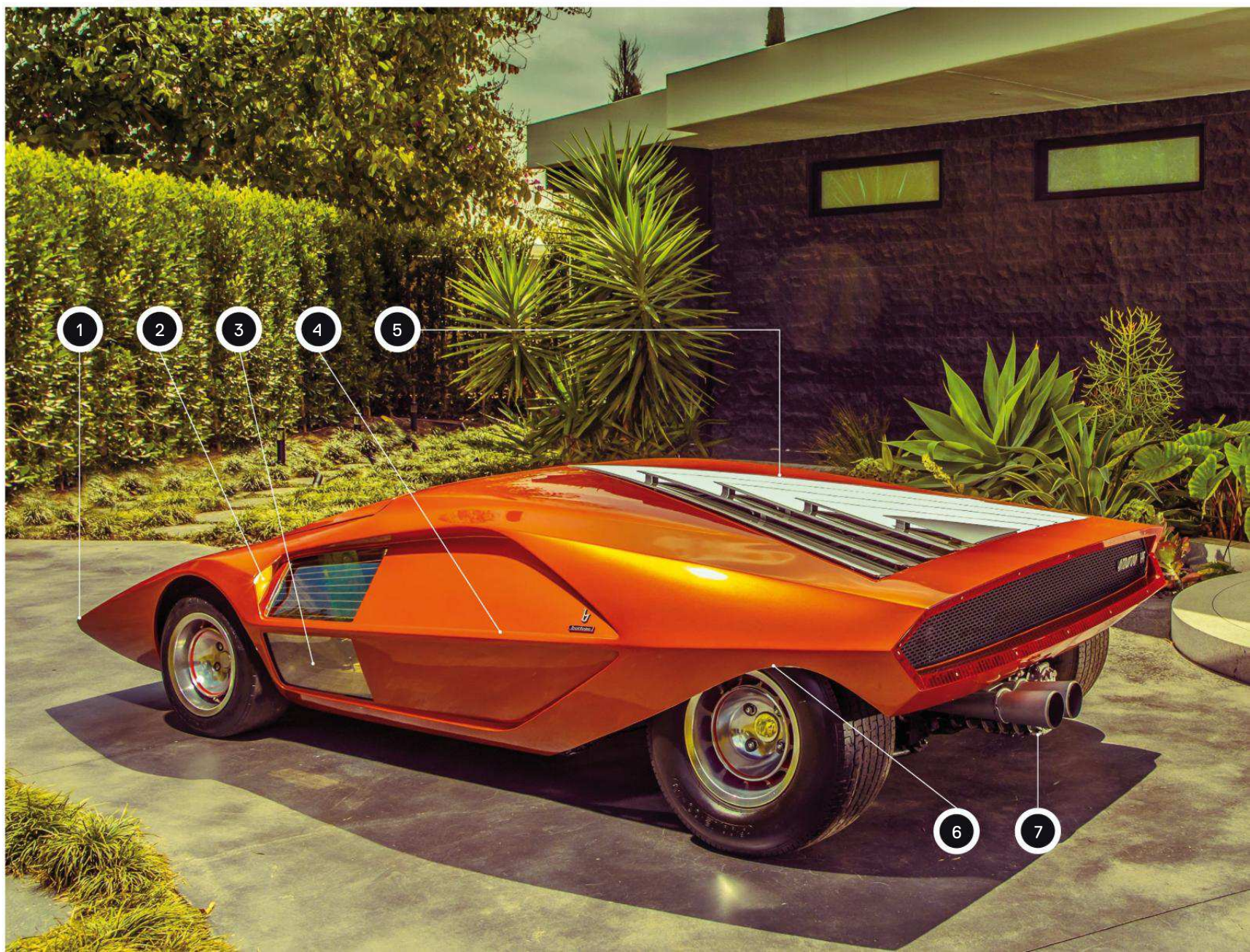
Rear 3/4 View



1. There are 10 tiny headlights in the full-width rectangular opening in the car's chisel-blade nose. It really is a pure wedge shape from the front-wheel centerline forward.

2. The mirrors are a joke. To actually drive the car, one was stuck up top where it could be seen through the upper edge of the windshield.

3. To some extent the lower side windows are a joke as well. There is nothing but pavement to be seen through them.



To my mind, there have been only a few truly conceptual, absolutely extraordinary concept cars, in particular one from General Motors and two from Carrozzeria Bertone. Of course, principal credit for their creation goes to the design bosses, Harley Earl at the end of his career and Nuccio Bertone. But in fact the shapes of the three vehicles were the brainchildren of their brilliant subordinates: Norman James for the Firebird III gas-turbine two-seater, Franco Scaglione for the Alfa Romeo BAT 7 aerodynamic study, and Marcello Gandini for the most extreme of all, the Lancia Stratos Zero. Of the three concepts, the latter is by far the most extreme, the most improbable, and the most interesting morphologically and in terms of its consequences.

Hundreds of significant designs have come from the hand and mind of Gandini, whose spirit of creation seems to have been liberated by his free rein on the Stratos Zero. To be sure, he had already created the most beautiful supercar of the '60s when he shaped the body of the



4. This very strong rising line is dead straight in pure profile, but in plan view it has a notable kink, bending inward notably toward the rear corners of the body, which are well outboard of the front ones.

5. The dramatic engine cover, made up of five superposed metal triangles that scoop air into the engine compartment, is hinged on the right and provides more than adequate access.

6. This is the first expression of the rear wheel opening that became a personal hallmark for Gandini—very successfully on the Lamborghini Countach LP400 but spectacularly ugly on the Stola S86 Diamante seen at the 2005 Geneva show. Airplane manufacturers, before jet speeds made all vertical tails virtually identical, used the shape of the vertical fin as a mark of identity; perhaps Gandini's love of aviation led him in this direction.

7. Letting the very handsome mechanical elements hang out without even the slightest attempt to hide them lets the wedge-shaped body be psychologically divorced from what racers like to call "the oily bits."

Lamborghini Miura, but others determined its architecture; he was simply the stylist. His Lamborghini Marzal mid-engine four-seater—the first ever—showed what he could do when he could influence the mechanicals. The Marzal was simply a lengthened Miura with the front bank of its transverse V-12 removed, but that work was done by Lamborghini engineers Gian Paolo Dallara and Paolo Stanzani. Stratos Zero was all Gandini, using the existing Lancia Fulvia front-drive V-4 but in the rear end instead.

Ridiculously low, totally impractical, and utterly fascinating in its tantalizing absurdity, the Zero is one of the most extraordinary cars ever made. Its name is perfectly appropriate in that it has zero practicality, zero utility, and almost zero visibility. One of my friends actually drove this car back in the early '70s in Los Angeles, and only for about 100 feet or so inside a building and at extremely low speed in first gear. But that brief episode was enough for him to recall the experience clearly 45 years later and to know full well he would not like to repeat it now that he's no longer a young man. Assuming, of course, he could still get in the car in the first place. He remembers it as extremely claustrophobic, pulling the windshield/door down over his head all too much like closing the lid of a coffin. It was an exercise in pushing a concept to extremes, so it was valid for Bertone in 1970. It also led, happily, to the wonderful Lancia Stratos that had nothing more than its name—slightly modified at that—in common. Well, Gandini was a common link as well, in that he was responsible for the entire package of the incredibly successful polyvalent rally car, able to handle the extremes of the Monte Carlo winter event (three outright wins) and the East African Safari.

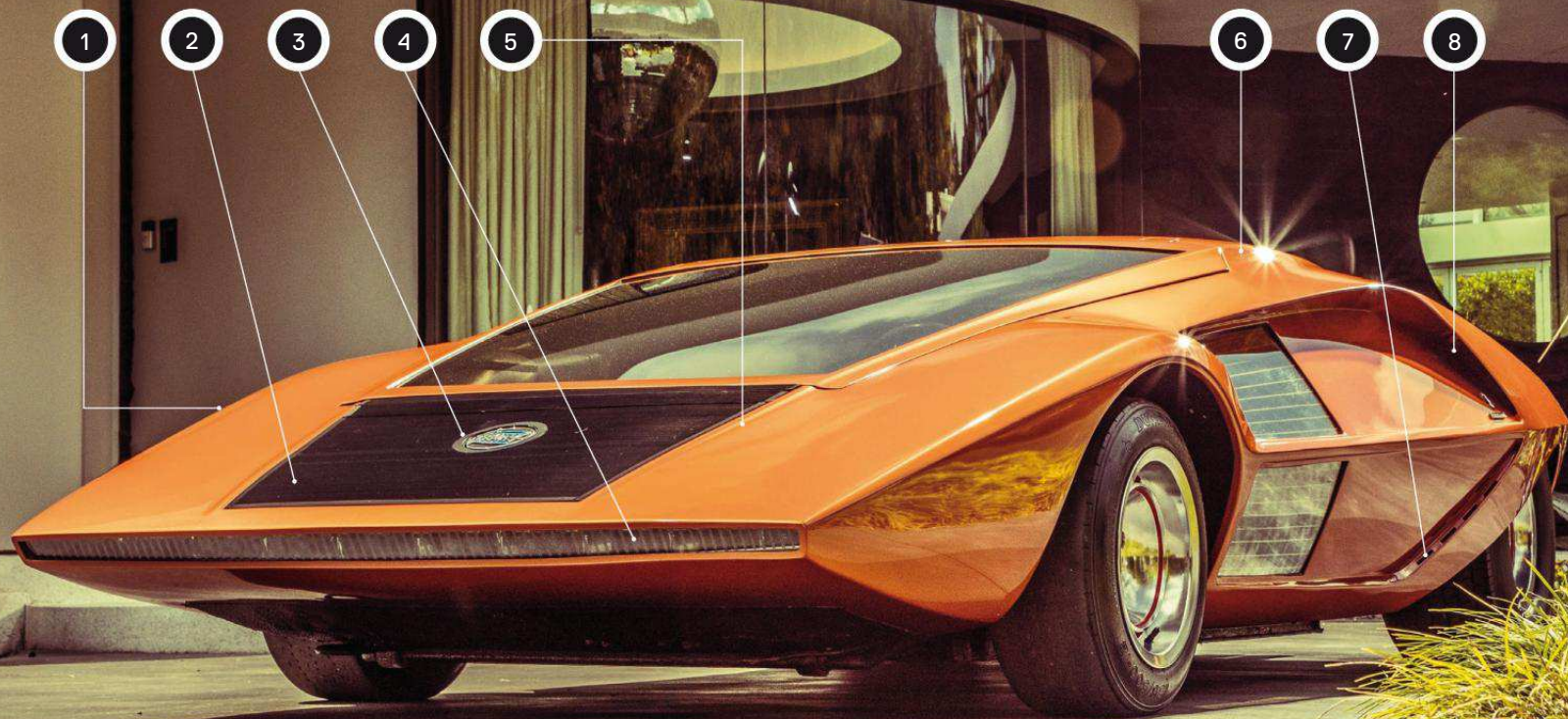
Throughout the '70s and '80s, wedge-shaped designs influenced by the Zero proliferated, including show examples from mainstream manufacturers like Mercedes-Benz and GM, and of course limited-production cars from Lotus, Maserati, and even the lowly Triumph TR-7. Many were beautiful, striking, and impressive, but no concept or production car has ever been as extreme as this one. **AM**

2

Front 3/4
View



Although the production Stratos packed a 2.4-liter V-6 from the Ferrari Dino, the Zero made use of a 1.6-liter V-4 from the Lancia Fulvia.





1. What appears in this view to be a sharp right-angle bend from the horizontal body plane to the sides is in fact a pair of lines with a subtly concave section between them, this outer line leading to the upper corner of the triangular mirror cove.

2. The black section is a rubber mat with very fine transverse ribs on which the driver and passenger step to gain access to the cockpit. The steering wheel folds forward and down out of the way as the rear-hinged windshield is lifted.

3. The big, round Lancia badge on the nose also serves as the latch for the door-cum-windshield, which is one and a half times wider at the rear edge than in front.

4. The front edge is not quite knife-sharp, as it seems in profile. It houses 10 separate headlamp elements, the slimmest then in existence, sourced in France.

5. There is a lot of careful, subtle surface modulation going on in the apparently simplistic front end. A slight rib at the edge of the welcome mat flows up into the roof, with a twisting panel framing the windshield, almost horizontal in front and becoming a near-vertical fence at the rear of the glass.

6. A kind of fence starts from the lower front corners of the windshield and reaches maximum height at the high point of the car's profile.

7. The filler panel between the lower outer body surface and the inset panel is perforated with five holes to ingest air ...

8. ... whereas the upper inset panel flows into the engine compartment, constituting a scoop for cooling air.



3

Cockpit View



1. It's late-'60s Apollo-era technology perhaps, but it really does seem more like a spaceship cabin than a car's cockpit even now.

2. There were no automotive airbags in 1970, but this padded sphere might have offered a little bit of protection. Notice the absence of safety belts.





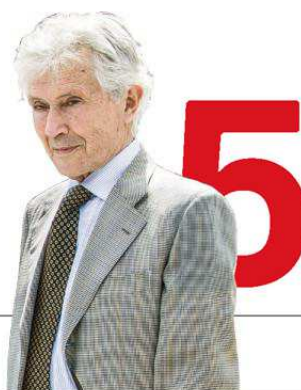
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Profile View





Marcello Gandini:
“It was really amusing.”



FOR A PERSONAL profile in our November 2009 issue, I visited Marcello Gandini’s magnificent home and personal studio, coming away with a highly positive impression of a very modest, extraordinarily capable creator. When I called him this spring to ask about his memories of the Lancia Stratos Zero, his first comment was that doing the car “was really amusing.”

This may well be the lowest (semi) roadworthy two-seat car ever made, its top surface only 33 inches above the ground. It was definitely not intended for normal use, even if it was indeed used—briefly—on the streets of both Milan and Turin back when it was a new sensation. There is a wonderful story about Nuccio Bertone taking it to Lancia’s Turin headquarters early in 1971 and being refused entrance by the gate guards—so he simply drove underneath the barrier. “I wasn’t there,” Gandini said. “Gian Beppe Panico says he was.” Panico, a born PR man, loves colorful stories, but in this case, as it is both possible and plausible, I tend to believe it happened.

That visit to Lancia was to discuss a purpose-built rally car derived in part from the Stratos Zero. The resulting Stratos HF prototype, incidentally one of three or four of Gandini’s favorites of the hundreds of vehicles he has designed, was a full 10 inches taller than the Zero. And the production cars were taller still, a full 10 percent more than the Ford GT40, all of which puts the Zero’s extreme dimensions in perspective.

We asked Gandini if he ever drove the Stratos Zero. “No, I never had a chance to do so,” he said. “It was mainly just an exercise to get the attention of Lancia management once they’d been taken over by Fiat.” Which was unsuccessful in that no one from Lancia came calling at the Bertone stand at the Turin motor show in 1970, when the car was first presented. But it did get driven.

“We had a young racing driver come to Bertone and drive Zero quite a bit, more than anyone else ever did,” Gandini said. “Emerson Fittipaldi.” Emerson and his brother, Wilson, were always fascinated with complex cars. But who would have thought a future world champion would have ever been in the strange, tight cockpit of this bizarre bolide? “It was a lot of fun to make a car as low as we could imagine and to organize the elements however we wanted,” Gandini said. “The seating is really far forward.”

For Gandini, it was even more fun creating the Stratos HF, which carried nothing from the Zero but the Stratos name and the Lancia badge. And of course Gandini’s imagination and brilliance. **AM**

ZERO REACHES THE IN CROWD

BY CONNER GOLDEN

FOR THREE DECADES following its debut, the Zero’s shine was actually a bit dim. Other than a brief cameo by a silver replica in Michael Jackson’s “Moonwalker” in 1988, this car spent most of its time quietly on display in Bertone’s museum in Caprie, Italy. Designers considered it a superstar, but to the pre-internet crowd it was an older car with extreme styling that out-Countached the then-outdated Lamborghini Countach.

Financial troubles forced Bertone to send a chunk of its cars to auction in 2011. Under private ownership for the first time, the Zero began a tour of U.S. museums, including the Petersen in Los Angeles, the High in Atlanta, Nashville’s Frist, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

Buzz began to build. Old images from Benedict Redgrove’s 2004 photo shoot of Bertone studios for *Wallpaper* magazine began to litter Instagram. The orange streak was captured simmering under a midcentury modern porte-cochère, almost as if it knew it was destined to be a favorite among the IG crowd. Articles and photo essays began to emerge on all the wild wedge studies, spilling over into non-car-focused places. One day, a fashion IG account posted Redgrove’s interpretation of the Zero. The next, the front page of Reddit featured a famous image of the Zero navigating clogged Italian streets in 1970.

Suddenly, it was a “now” car. Designer Ken Okuyama unveiled the Kode 0 hypercar at The Quail last year during Monterey Car Week, pulling both the name and design cues from the almost 50-year-old Lancia. Lamborghini’s new Terzo Millennio concept shared studio space with a handmade scale model of the Lancia on a plinth. And Zero fever is only about to get worse: Under new ownership, the wedge is slated to appear on “Jay Leno’s Garage” ahead of its planned appearance at this year’s Villa d’Este show in Italy. **AM**

1. Each of these sharp fender-edge hard lines derives from the upper edge of the front fenders. The upper one flows into the triangular mirror aperture that ends the fender. The other flows around the wheel opening and into the rib on the body sides.

2. Nearly mirror-image holes are cut into the body’s side surfaces. Each is framed by a hard line with a tight radius at the end of the principal inset surface. The upper indented surface becomes a scoop to bring air into the engine compartment.

3. The incised and depressed surface below the rib is less inclined toward the interior of the volume.

4. The gearbox, itself a handsome, functional ribbed surface, is allowed to be completely seen below the translucent red plastic taillight framing for the rear body aperture. Bright mechanical fastener heads are spaced around the perimeter, one of them perfectly centered on the axis of the crankshaft. The megaphone-shaped exhaust tips are asymmetrically placed entirely to the left.



Gunther Werks

engineers
another new-
world take
on an old-
school

➔ **NOSTALGIA IS ONE** hell of a drug, a slippery sentiment that can coax mortgage-sized sums of cash into otherwise obsolete sports cars, transforming them into novel combinations of old-school architecture and new-world engineering.

The latest in a relatively recent string of high-dollar Porsche 911 conversions comes from a seemingly unlikely source: Vorsteiner, a Southern California firm known for trick aftermarket carbon-fiber body panels and wheels.

Breaking bread with Vorsteiner founder Peter Nam at a small cafe near the foot of Angeles Crest Highway introduces me to one of the most extreme strains of driving enthusiast on the planet. One key point of reference: Nam's opinions on the time BMW lost the plot. "I was a BMW M-car freak," he says, "but I fell out of love when the E92 [M3] came around because it became a cruiser, not a motorsports [based] car. It became too accessible to a broad group of people." We feel your pain, Peter.

That type of thinking led Nam to create Gunther Werks, whose mission is to build analog, driver-focused sports cars that are no less earnestly executed than something that springs from the minds of Porsche's monomaniacal mad scientists in Zuffenhausen. Nam's first creation, the 400R, tips a hat to Porsche's GT3 RS limited edition motorsports-inspired 911s. Porsche's first factory GT3 RS model was a Europe-only 996-based variant introduced in 2003. The sub-3,000-pound vehicle claimed radically reworked handling capabilities and race-spec hardware—most crucially, repositioned front suspension uprights that enabled improved suspension geometry.



MISSION 993

by BASEM WASEF photography by TED7





The Gunther Werks 400R takes that approach to the mat by starting with an air-cooled 993 donor car (in the case of our test subject, a base 1995 911 Carrera), stripping it down to the bare chassis, and altering its fundamental architecture in order to create something significantly lighter, more powerful, and with better handling. The front suspension mounts are repositioned outward, creating a perfectly square, 63-inch front and rear track. The square setup is the golden mean of chassis geometry, shared by everything from Porsche's Carrera GT and 918 Spyder to Ferrari's LaFerrari. Gunther Werks installs custom-built KW Clubsport coil-overs, along with solid bushings, revised drop links, and 993 Cup anti-roll bars by Eibach. Chassis and suspension engineer Cary Eisenlohr says the shock and anti-roll-bar tuning was the least labor-intensive part of the process; once the geometry was revised, most of the work focused on perfecting the balance between grip and road feel, which involved fine-tuning the roll center and managing bump steer.



THE 400R
DELIVERS
TREMENDOUS
LATERAL GRIP
BUT ALSO
RESPONDS
TO STEERING
INPUT WITH
FLUID TURN-
IN, OFFERING
EXCELLENT
FEEDBACK.

←
An increased front track lends the 400R a meatier stance than the 993's narrow-nosed platform. Below, keen eyes will spot a 964-era steering wheel and a 993 RS-sourced shifter covered in Alcantara.
↓

The process of modifying the donor car includes the luxury of starting from scratch, which means addenda such as sunroofs (which came on all U.S.-bound 993 Carreras) can be deleted, saving weight (45 pounds in the case of the sunroof). A 3-D-printed aluminum headlamp housing offers a distinctive look and is shielded by a layer of glass baked by a veteran concept car builder; although they're thoroughly bespoke, the units retain their original bucket mounts so they can be removed and serviced at Porsche dealerships. The same clay modeler responsible for a certain German supercar of the early 2000s shaped the revised nose, while a modeler with experience at Audi and Aston Martin formed the fenders. The rear spoiler shares its distinctive profile with that of the 997.2 GT3 RS and uses three intakes to create a ram air effect.

The chassis is rose-jointed, seam-welded, and media-blasted before getting draped in a pre-preg carbon-fiber skin, which is aerodynamically shaped using computational flow dynamics. The only remaining original body panels are the steel doors (retained for crash protection), the door handles, and the mirrors. The extreme makeover results in a lower, wider, and considerably more purposeful package that weighs in at a mere 2,670 pounds—quite a slim down from the stock car, which tips the scales at slightly less than 3,200 pounds. The 400R's curb weight is capable of dipping below 2,600 pounds by replacing the heavy undercoating with a special primer and paint, and by incorporating optional lighter seats, carbon-fiber doors, and carbon-fiber dash panels.

Gunther Werks ships the 993's 3.6-liter flat-six engine to Rothsport Racing for a similarly comprehensive reworking, during which it grows in displacement to 4.0 liters. Everything from con rods and pistons to valvetrain and exhaust are altered, even down to minutiae such as enlarged fan blades, which are curved for a slightly more mechanical sound. Temperature management is also aided by adding a second oil cooler and positioning both to better capitalize on airflow. The car receives a MoTeC engine management system and a carbon-fiber plenum from U.K.-based Eventuri, whose geometry is designed to create a venturi effect producing a 6-horsepower gain.

Incremental additional power gains are also realized from the introduction of an electric steering pump and HVAC unit, which no longer sap energy from the engine. The A/C hardware is relocated to the front of the car, enabling shorter plumbing and better weight distribution. By the time the Oregon-based firm is done with the engine, only the 993's notoriously stout block remains, which allows the owner to retain the powerplant's original serial number. The reworked mill produces 419 horsepower and 315 lb-ft of torque, working with a rebuilt six-speed manual gearbox with shortened first through fifth gears; sixth remains an overdrive gear. Another staggering point of reference: With 313.9 horsepower per ton, the 400R is, pound for pound, mightier than a 959 (253.7 hp/ton).

The 400R's cabin is a sparse and stripped-down yet finely finished space that trades the 993's factory-installed plastic and vinyl bits for top-stitched Alcantara. The deleted rear seats are also replaced with matte-finished sheets of the lightweight stuff, as is the front trunk area. Sidle into the fixed Cobra carbon-fiber bucket driver's seat, and dead ahead is the familiar, centrally positioned Porsche tachometer (though this VDO gauge is finished in red and indicates a 7,800-rpm redline). The 4.0-liter powerplant fires up with the same Le Mans-inspired left-hand key ritual, though the center console houses a red button that can open an exhaust valve for a throatier sound and switches the MoTeC engine management system to extract 30 more horsepower.

Any 911 owner will find a spatial and ergonomic familiarity behind the wheel of the 400R; everything is in its right place. Once in motion, though, the heightened level of performance dynamics belies the simplicity of the original car's '90s-era platform. Acceleration is eye-opening: Release the clutch, and the 4.0-liter pulls reasonably strongly at low rpm, climbing with a newfound vigor from 4,000 rpm onward that crescendos with a rousing, screaming 7,800-rpm finish. Those mid- to upper ranges are the engine's sweet spot, where it unfurls a flow of horsepower and tractor-beams the car forward. Down low, it will happily burble along at a couple thousand revolutions, pulling strongly enough to escalate your speed without being startling or abrupt. But drop a gear or two into the 4,000-plus-





rpm range, and the engine rouses with a more urgent punch, delivering an addictive blast of acceleration that squeezes you into your seat and assaults the cabin with intake and exhaust howl.

On a personal note, I upgraded the wheels, tires, shocks, control arms, and drop links of my '97 993 in search of a more rear-biased feel, but I found that the staggered front/rear track width still exhibits a natural tendency toward understeer. When I take my first corner in the 400R, the response is almost unrecognizable: The front end carves and turns like no mildly modified 993 could. Riding on 245 front and 315 rear Michelin Sport Cup rubber wrapped around 18-inch wheels, the 400R delivers tremendous lateral grip but also responds to steering input with fluid turn-in, offering excellent feedback through its thick, leather-wrapped steering wheel. Some understeer becomes apparent during higher-speed, on-throttle corner entries, which Eisenlohr says was a choice to help keep drivers from encountering a

Gunther Werks 400R

ON SALE:
Available by special order

PRICE:
\$525,000 + donor 993

ENGINE:
4.0L DOHC
24-valve flat-6/419 hp
@ 7,800 rpm, 315 lb-ft
@ 6,500 rpm

TRANSMISSION:
6-speed manual

LAYOUT:
2-door, 2-passenger,
rear-engine, RWD coupe

EPA MILEAGE:
N/A

L x W x H:
167.7 x 75.25 x 48.25 in

WHEELBASE:
89.45 in

WEIGHT:
2,670 lb

0-60 MPH:
3.6 sec (est)

TOP SPEED:
N/A



snap oversteer situation. As a safety mechanism, it provides a progressive indication of where the rear tires are starting to slip in tiny increments, reassuring feedback on Angeles Crest Highway, as most of its 66 miles includes steep cliffside drops. Six-piston front and four-piston rear Brembo brakes with ABS offer outstanding stopping power that's easy to modulate.

Starting at \$525,000 (not including the donor car) with only 25 examples available, the 400R begs the inevitable comparison to Singer Vehicle Design's similarly priced long-nose creations. Although the two boutiques focus on different eras of air-cooled 911s, they also do so with varying levels of fidelity to the original design. Both offer heightened performance, though Gunther Werks departs from the orthodox canon of Porsche styling with its more overt swollen-fendered twist. With the 400R's order book nearly full, Nam says he is already working on another series that will be "taken to a completely different level." The tease is enough to spawn wild thoughts among Porschephiles. Nostalgia, it seems, never sleeps. **AM**





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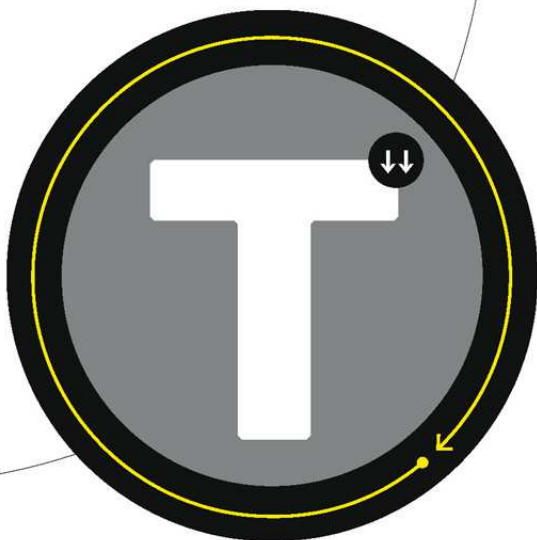
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BY ANDY PILGRIM

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN TRAJANO

THE 2019 CORVETTE ZR1 TAKES THE
C7 TOWARD THE END OF ITS RUN,
SHOWCASING JUST HOW
FAR IT HAS COME

CLE



THE FIRST TIME Teddy Roosevelt's words, "Speak softly and carry a big stick," occurred to me as I reviewed a car while driving a 2009 Chevrolet Corvette ZR1. Now, after testing the new 2019 ZR1 on a couple of racetracks within the span of a few days, "Speak rudely and wield a really fat club" might be more appropriate.

After my first laps at the limit around Road Atlanta in the latest ZR1, the words of General Motors executive VP of global product development Mark Reuss, who was on hand, rang true. "Things haven't changed at GM as far as stretching the technology envelope," he said. "ZR1 has to set the upper limits of performance and be a technological beacon in chassis, design, and materials."

Oh, and don't forget the engine. Corvette engineers were not content with the kidney-flattening supercharged LT4 V-8 that kicks out 650 hp and 650 lb-ft of torque in the Z06. The new ZR1 has a supercharged LT5 V-8 spitting 755 horsepower at 6,300 rpm and 715 lb-ft at 4,400 rpm. Certified top speed is 212.49 mph, which came from

56



← Red and yellow cars with optional matching interior stitching and the manual transmission also get color-synchronized rev-match paddles.



a two-way average (215 mph/210 mph). Chevy restricts the ZR1 to a top speed of 215 mph to be within tire-safety standards. Base price for the coupe is \$122,095 when you add the \$2,100 gas guzzler tax. The convertible starts at \$126,095. Hey, you only need one kidney, anyway.

The ZR1 is a heavily track-focused performance car, but I did drive it for several hours on the road. Corvette critics will note nothing particularly different about the ZR1's interior or controls compared to other C7-generation models, which is no surprise because this is the end of the platform's life cycle. However, changes to the suspension and magnetic-ride shocks are noteworthy; they provide better ride quality and compliance over road imperfections, noticeable improvements compared to a Z06. That said, new C7 Z06s now receive the same shock programming as the ZR1.

In today's domestic automaker landscape, it would be reasonable to wonder if there was any pushback from within GM about the merits of building a 755-hp street missile. But apparently not on Reuss' watch. "The Corvette



57

COMING INTO TURN 1, THE CAR WAS BEYOND 150 MPH, STILL ACCELERATING HARD AS I ENTERED THE BRAKE ZONE. I PUSHED THE STOP PEDAL HARD, AND THE ZR1 DUTIFULLY SPIT MY EYEBALLS OUT OF MY HEAD.



"THE Z06
COOLING
CONCERNS
ON-TRACK
HAVE BEEN
DEALT WITH IN
THE ZR1."

has always been about attainable high performance," he said. "As far as the 755 horsepower, approval of something like the ZR1 starts and stops with me."

Chevrolet says the ZR1 (with the \$1,725 eight-speed automatic transmission) runs 0-60 mph in 2.85 seconds and from 0 to 100 mph in just 6.0 seconds. Launching the car from a standstill is not easy; you or the traction control will work overtime to keep wheelspin at bay all the way to 60, which doesn't do much to help the time.

In other matters, the car has a half-inch-wider front rim size compared to the Z06, which helps the front end work better when combined with the 60 percent increase in overall downforce. Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 rubber is on duty, with 285/30-R19s up front and 335/25-R20s in the rear. The downforce improvement (the car produces a total of 950 pounds at top speed with the \$2,995 ZTK/high-wing option) also comes with no increase in drag versus the Z06, Chevy says—a nice trick if you can do it.

According to Corvette executive chief engineer Tadge Juechter, in terms of performance goals for the new car, "The ZR1 has always meant top performance, no limits. When we ask the customer, 'How much power do you want?' they say, 'How much can you give me?' There were no hard requirements like a power number. We tried to extend all aspects as much as possible." To his point about the definition of the ZR1, the model's history was front and center in several of the engineering presentations held during the media launch.

"ZR-1" was originally a GM Regular Production Option code identifying a special performance package from 1970 to '72; it was not originally recognized as a car-model identifier. Meanwhile, of course, many people refer to the 1990 model as the first Corvette ZR-1—The King of the Hill. Initial road tests of the latter created quite a stir almost 30 years ago, with performance far superior to other Corvettes from the late '70s and early '80s given that many of them



CONFIRMED, THIS BEAUTY RUNS DEEP



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ZR-1s in the 1991 Rolex 24 at Daytona and 12 Hours of Sebring. I drove one of those ZR-1s in both of those races, a car that is now in the Smithsonian collection in Washington, D.C. I also drove a ZR-1 street car back in 1990, and vivid memories are the noise, brutal acceleration, grip level, and stability. The whole package was astonishing for a production car, and the experience of driving that “red rocket” all those years ago is forever welded into my brain.

Now in 2018 I find myself sitting in another red 1990 ZR-1 at the Motorsports Park racetrack in Bowling Green, Kentucky. This pristine example, with just more than 6,000 miles on the odometer, was lent to us by the National

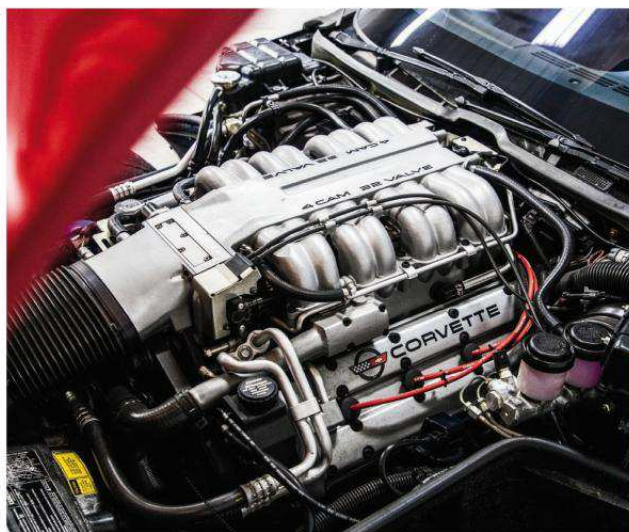
were strangled by emissions regulations. Magazines even pitted the 1990 ZR-1 (375 hp at 6,200 rpm, 370 lb-ft at 4,500 rpm) head-to-head against machines such as the mighty Porsche 911 Turbo—and nobody laughed.

In 1991 the 911 Turbo’s base price was around \$100,000. (There was no 1990 model-year Turbo.) The ZR-1 was a comparative bargain at \$58,994, with the ZR-1 package accounting for \$27,015 of that. People were happy to pay for the new capability, ripping from 0 to 60 mph in less than 5 seconds, which was supercar performance for the era. Credit was given to GM for working with the Mercury Marine Company and Lotus Engineering to help expand the technology envelope, creating the double-overhead-cam LT5 engine and a legend in the process. Lotus also helped with the car’s braking, steering, and adjustable ride control.

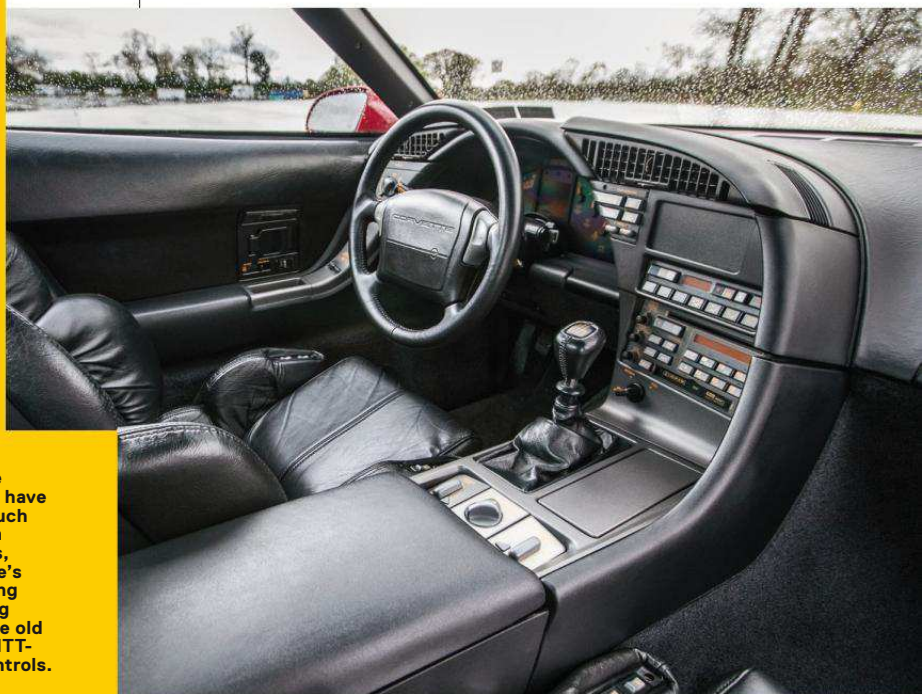
In 1990 I raced for the Morrison Motorsports team, the same outfit that set world speed endurance records with a stock 1990 ZR-1 and also campaigned two mostly stock



Corvette Museum, which owns the track. Leaving pit lane in the old beast, I mused how much fun a 10/10ths hot lap might be. But then I imagined the look on museum curator Derek Moore’s face if his baby came back with chunks of rubber missing. So I took it easy, and the car ran flawlessly while little bursts of acceleration sparked memories of the first time I felt the LT5’s smooth, urgent power.



→ Corvette interiors have taken much criticism for years, but there’s something appealing about the old ZR-1’s KITT-style controls.



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Then, once again, it was time to drive the 2019 ZR1 on a racetrack. At Road Atlanta three days earlier, the temperature reached almost 90 degrees. Although the car went ridiculously fast, lap records weren't in the cards thanks to the heat sliming up the tarmac. But the temperature at Motorsports Park was now just 60 degrees.

The ZR1 did not disappoint. Coming into Turn 1, the car was beyond 150 mph, still accelerating hard as I entered the brake zone. I pushed the stop pedal hard, and the ZR1 dutifully spit my eyeballs out of my head. I recently tested a very capable GT4 race car and was impressed by its brakes; the ZR1 was equally impressive. The tires, aerodynamic downforce, and all-new Brembo carbon-ceramic stoppers combined for more than 1.7 g's worth of deceleration (serious race car good). I made a mental note not to use the brakes this hard with a cement truck behind me out on public roads.

Over the course of several days, I tried both the automatic and seven-speed manual versions of the car; if I were to buy the ZR1 for track days, I would without question buy the automatic. Not only because it shifts quicker but also because I only weigh about 155 pounds; despite using the seat belt locking mechanism, I found myself moving around too much in the seat while on maximum attack due to the forces the ZR1 exerted all the way around Motorsports Park's 24-turn, 3.2-mile track. In the automatic I can keep both hands on the wheel for a little extra support. It's worth noting I had no issues at all with the seat holding me solid with normal or spirited street driving.

Meanwhile, the car's E-ticket handling jolted Juechter's words back to the top of my mind. "The ZR1 technology we're most proud of is the front underwing and general aero of the car," he said. "Also, the trackability. It is very easy to drop the suspension and adjust the rear wing, and off you go." He also addressed the disappointment some people had with the Z06's lack of cooling during track use: "The Z06 cooling concerns on-track have been dealt with in the ZR1." To test his claim, I did a long run of almost 25 minutes at Road Atlanta in the blazing heat. My laps, at fast race pace, were all between 1 minute, 30.4 seconds and 1:31.7. Those were quite quick times for the conditions, and the car exhibited very little drop-off in performance.



THE SPECS

2019

CHEVROLET
CORVETTE ZR1

ON SALE:

Now

PRICE:

\$122,095 (base)

ENGINE:

6.2L supercharged OHV
16-valve V-8/755 hp @
6,300 rpm, 715 lb-ft
@ 4,400 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

7-speed manual,
8-speed automatic

LAYOUT:

2-door, 2-passenger,
front-engine, RWD coupe

EPA MILEAGE:

15/22 mpg (city/hwy)

L x W x H:

179.8 x 77.4 x 48.5 in

WHEELBASE:

106.7 in

WEIGHT:

3,560 lb

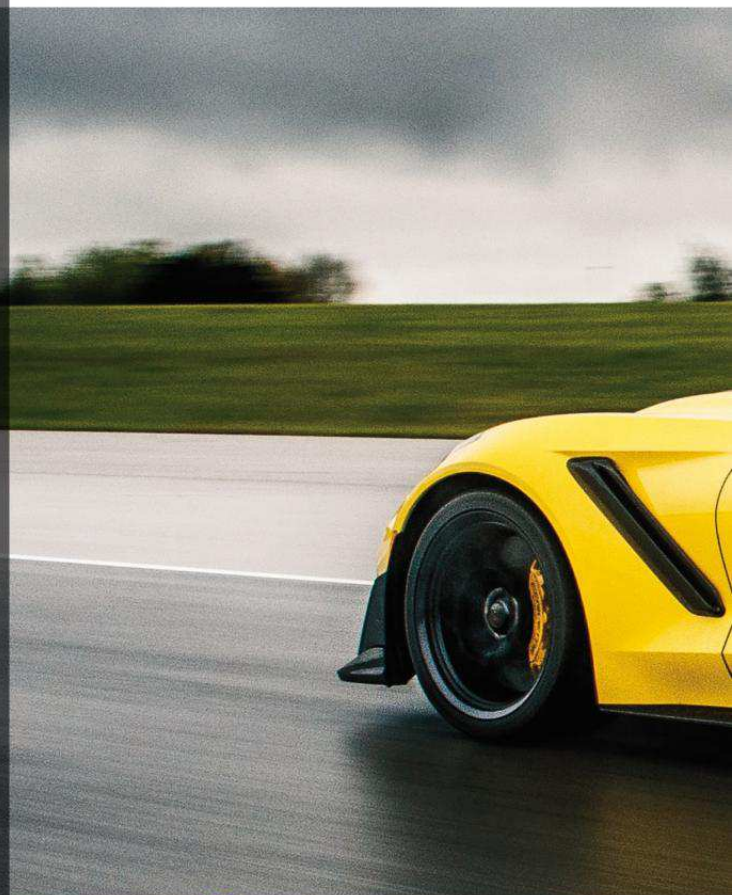
0-60 MPH:

2.85 sec
(with automatic)

TOP SPEED:

215 mph
(electronically limited)

"WHY ON
EARTH WOULD
ANYONE WANT
A SELF-DRIVING
CORVETTE?
THAT WOULD BE
LIKE HAVING A
SELF-KISSING
GIRLFRIEND."



You probably have read hyperbole, and then some, about road cars that sound unreal. In this case, though, I really have never heard a production car sound this much like a race car in both tone and volume. There is some engineering trickery in one of the mufflers, featuring a spring-loaded valve that burps open or stays closed based on driving style. Bring your earplugs, Mildred.

At the end of the day, I finally had time to try to rip off a really fast lap in a car equipped with the automatic. At the limit the ZR1 is very balanced; I could easily control both front and rear tire slide with throttle and steering quickly enough to maintain good momentum, never allowing the slide to reach a point where I lost time. When the lap time crackled through the track radio, it



The new ZR1 requires little effort to put it into its ultimate track-driving configuration, which rips circuits to shreds. ↑

63



blared a new official lap record for a production car on OE tires for the Motorsports Park racetrack: 2:05.59. This time is several seconds quicker than any other production car has managed on the circuit since it opened in 2013.

Perhaps setting a new MSP benchmark was an appropriate way to send the C7 Corvette into the sunset, potentially truly marking the end of an era. A mid-engine Corvette is finally on the horizon, after all, though Reuss and Juechter predictably plead the fifth on any inquiries into the matter. Other creeping—sprinting?—trends such as autonomy could also play a role in the car's future. “Who wants to sit in traffic for three hours paying attention to stopping and starting if the car can do it for them?” Reuss asked. But Juechter then followed mischievously with a quote from a Corvette customer: “Why on earth would anyone want a self-driving Corvette? That would be like having a self-kissing girlfriend.”

For now and the foreseeable future, then, custodians of performance like Reuss and Juechter plan to keep on facilitating street-legal rockets like the new ZR1. The first time an owner experiences the brutal shove in the back, they're pretty much guaranteed to think they got a bargain. Teddy Roosevelt would be blown away. **AM**



saving preston's tucker

BY RORY JURNECKA ↓ PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM WALKER



70 YEARS AFTER IT WAS BUILT,
PRESTON TUCKER'S PERSONAL CAR
HAS FOUND ITS SANCTUARY



TUCKER SOLD THE CAR TO WINTHROP ROCKEFELLER, AN HEIR TO THE ROCKEFELLER FORTUNE, WHO DROVE IT DAILY WHILE SERVING AS GOVERNOR OF ARKANSAS.

► **WHAT WOULD PRESTON TUCKER** think of the silver-gray-green Tucker 48 sitting in the showroom of Nostalgic Motoring Ltd.? The car, chassis No. 1,029 (the 29th of 51 built and just 47 survivors), was an integral part of his life between 1948, when he first drove it off the assembly line, and 1955, shortly before his death from lung cancer. This exact car was Tucker's personal vehicle, spending most of its time in Ypsilanti, Michigan, where Tucker's home, family, and machine shop were all located, some 250 miles east of the Tucker Corporation's Chicago factory.

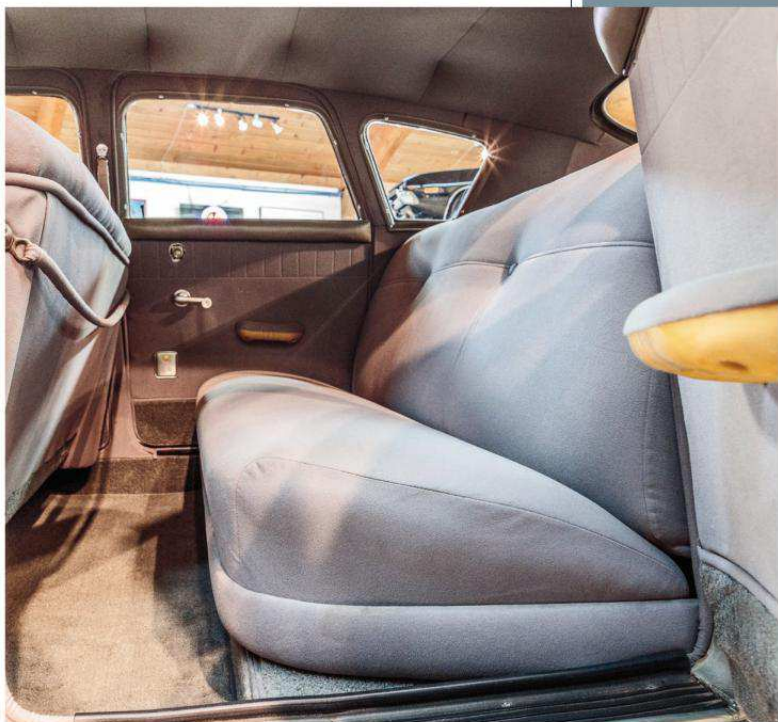
Roughly 2,000 employees, including a staggering 250 engineers, toiled in the factory day and night, never quite keeping up with Tucker's expectations for his fledgling and ultimately ill-fated venture to produce an advanced vehicle the industry giants in Detroit would never understand. He was on a quest to prove good enough was wholly inadequate, and he never thought to ask why such a car couldn't be built. That's a philosophy that jibes with chassis 29's present owner, Mark Lieberman, who paid \$1,792,500 for not just the privilege of calling Tucker's car his own for a time but also the honor of returning the machine to its former glory.

PRESTON TUCKER: THE TUCKER AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF AMERICA, INC.





There's patina everywhere on No. 29, Preston Tucker's personal car. The cracked instrument surround will be replaced with one of Mark Lieberman's reproductions.



Lieberman founded Nostalgic Motoring, a collector car sales and restoration shop, 23 years ago. In 2009, it moved into a former church, the so-called "Car Sanctuary" tucked off a side road down the street from SRT's headquarters in Auburn Hills, Michigan. When he was 12, Lieberman started fixing mopeds for spending money, and at 13 he started his first business. By his mid-20s he was a plastics recycling mogul, having jumped in headfirst on a chance opportunity to recycle engineered thermoplastics—industrial plastic waste produced by the automotive industry. At the time, no one was able to recycle the material, but Lieberman's naivety would ultimately power his success. It's easy to draw a parallel between him and Tucker. "I didn't know that couldn't be done," Lieberman says of his plastics business, founded in 1985 and sold in 2007. "That's why I did it."

Whereas Tucker was not successful with his venture, Lieberman, a lifelong car fanatic, was. The proceeds from selling the plastics business enabled Lieberman "the financial ability to just play with cars," as he puts it. He has become one of the world's foremost Tucker authorities,

and through his knowledge of developing plastic and rubber compounds, he has reproduced many items original to the Tucker 48, including the car's failure-prone tubular, rubber-filled Torsilastic suspension components. That's a fault Tucker's former car has; although it looks perfectly drivable with its lustrous paint and shiny chrome, the collapsed front suspension has a temporary fix to give it the proper stance for photographs, Lieberman says.

"I spent a lot of money and a lot of time making a system that worked," he recalls. "Before then, you'd have people putting coil-overs and welding all manner of contraptions in these cars to suspend them because they were all collapsed. I'm still the only guy on the planet that makes this stuff. We can make cars ride like they were supposed to in '48."

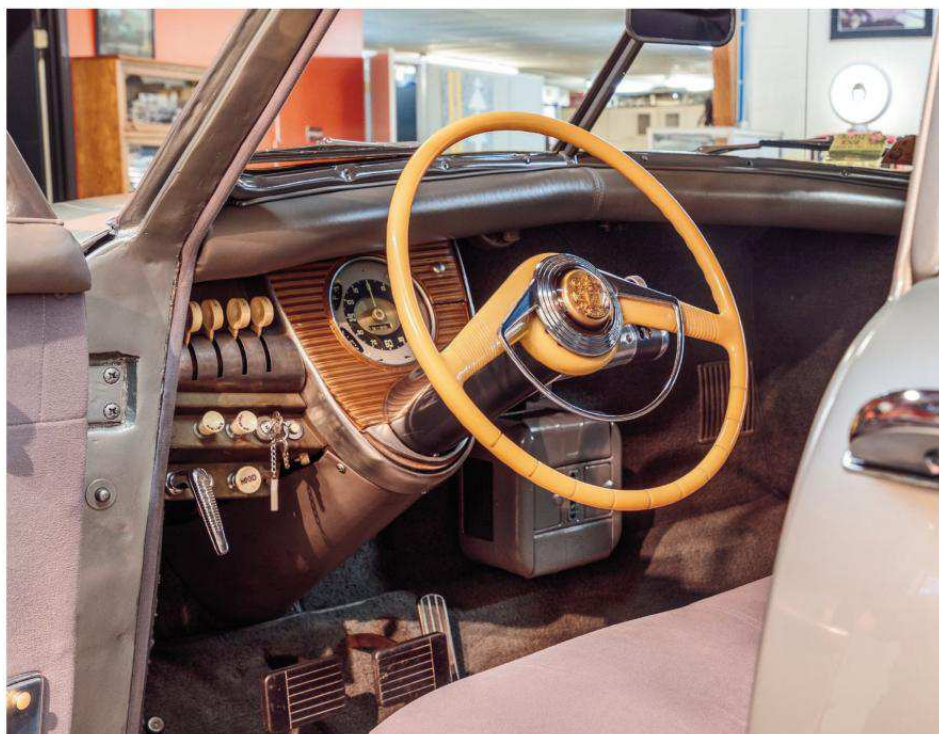
This is the fifth Tucker Lieberman has owned. He bought his first one out of a barn in dire condition in 1991, restored it, and held on to it for 15 years. The tall, lanky native Michigan resident reels off chassis numbers and details of specific cars like a baseball historian reciting statistics. His enthusiasm is infectious, and even he seems to be amazed by the knowledge he shares with others, as if he is hearing the stories himself for the first time.

When it comes to No. 29, Lieberman can talk nearly nonstop for as long as you like. He tells us that in its early days, it was used for speed testing at Indianapolis Motor Speedway and also demonstrated the capability of Tucker vehicles in a promotional film.

Before he died, Tucker sold the car to Winthrop Rockefeller, an heir to the Rockefeller fortune, who drove it daily while serving as governor of Arkansas. From there it passed through several hands, including those of singer James Brown's manager, and was featured prominently in "Tucker: The Man and His Dream," a 1988 movie directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Then it entered a static private collection and was generally unloved and unused for the better part of a decade. When the car popped up at RM Sotheby's Scottsdale auction in January, Lieberman pounced.

"As I worked my way through early cars and late cars, what's the next thing to do? I want Preston's car," Lieberman says. "From a technical standpoint, it's kind of unique, but from a significance and historical standpoint, it's kind of huge."

Indeed, No. 29 has several features Tucker himself had added to not just this car but also Tuckers Nos. 30 and 31—both cars owned originally by his family. Among these is the hollow ringlike shift-lever center, which was a solid



↑
Tucker's Torsilastic suspension design was intriguing but prone to failure. Nostalgic Motoring developed these new, more durable pieces.



disc on standard Tuckers. Tucker evidently found shifting with a finger slipped through the center was more comfortable to him. He also added additional support to the rear suspension for greater stability and a Babcock water heater to combat frigid Michigan winters.

Inside, No. 29 presents like the 20,000-mile car it is. There's a crack on the plastic speedometer surround, but Lieberman reproduces those, too. The interior upholstery was redone, but the original stuff miraculously resides just underneath. Ultimately, Lieberman will fully restore No. 29, and there are plenty of clues to help him do it the right way.

"My focus is going to be on getting this car to be as correct and as original as it was when Preston took it for the first time out of the factory," Lieberman says. "Underneath the original upholstery and glove box is original paint, and it's preserved—it hasn't been degraded by heat or sun. That should be a spot-on point to match color from. We remanufacture all the rubber, so the sill plates and all that will be fresh and manufactured to the original blueprints."



69

“When cars came in for service, they’d take the engine out, slap a good one in, and you’d drive away, then return to have the other engine put back when it was serviced.”



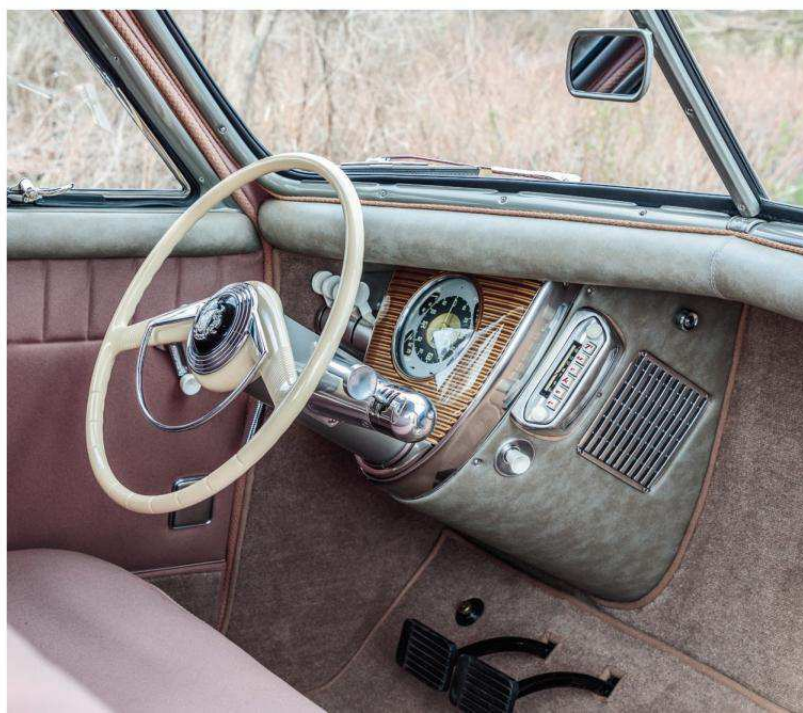


With Lieberman's resources and knowledge, a Tucker restoration seems like it should be easy, but there's a lot of hard manual labor and a ton of research put into the process.

"For the last several years I've been the director of the Tucker club archives, and I have access to all the files and data," Lieberman says. "Being able to use the blueprints is key to making this all correct and original. We're going to preserve areas of spot welds and construction that was practiced at the time. These cars have an enormous amount of lead [filler] in them; I got 300 pounds of lead off of car No. 6. The cars are sculpted. You can't take the door off one and put it on another. It's not going to fit."

Lieberman is reluctant to drive the vehicle in its present state. Besides the suspension, the ancient, "crispy" wiring is a fire hazard threatening to erase the car from history. Instead, we turn to No. 46, a fully restored example in Lieberman's custody. The car is on consignment for sale, but it will also be featured at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in August as part of a special Tucker class.

As with all Tuckers, No. 46 has its own unique and interesting story. Once it was part of the Fabulous Tuckers Exhibit, a traveling Tucker fair and carnival show run by a man named Nick Jenin. Later, 46's body was dropped onto an Oldsmobile chassis and converted to front-mounted Rocket V-8 power with an automatic transmission for Jenin's daughter. A Mercury dealership owner then repeated the process with a Mercury chassis and engine. Ultimately, 46 was



treated to a full restoration, with a correct Tucker-modified Franklin 334-cubic-inch aviation engine back in place in the rear of the car. It's not the same engine it left the factory with, which isn't uncommon, according to Lieberman.

"More than half of the Tuckers don't have their original engine since they were designed to be a quick-change engine," he says. "When cars came in for service, they'd take the engine out, slap a good one in, and you'd drive away, then return to have the other engine put back when it was serviced." Apparently more than a few original motors were never reinstalled before Tucker Corporation disbanded.

Either way, the Tucker has massive road presence on the small, winding lanes of Auburn Hills. "It's like a massively giant 356 Porsche," Lieberman says. "A little



ass-heavy, but it has a light front end and handles well with the right suspension. It doesn't have a lot of body roll, stays relatively flat, and you can pretty much turn the wheel with two fingers."

Later, back inside the church-turned-shop, I climb behind No. 29's wheel and look over the broad hood. The thin plastic steering wheel is huge, which is also exactly how the car feels when you're planted inside. Lieberman grins. But will he keep No. 29 when its restoration is finished?

"I kind of adopted the philosophy that my station with Tucker is to get them, bring them back to the way they're supposed to be, pass them on to the next conservator, and go grab another one," he says in a somewhat somber tone. "Will I have this one forever? Forever's a long time." **AM**



← No. 46 lived a long and storied life, but it's back to its original configuration in time for the 2018 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in August.

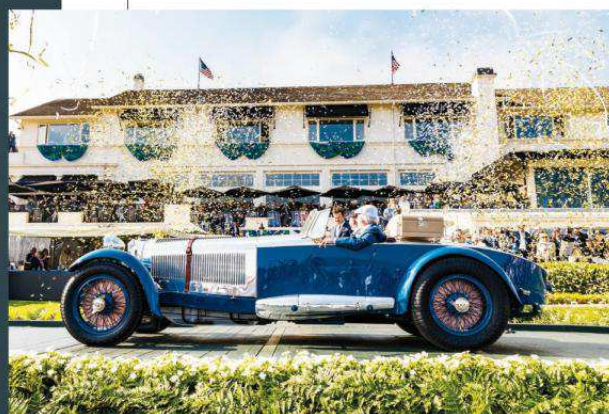
TUCKERS ON THE GREEN



THIS YEAR'S PEBBLE BEACH

Concours d'Elegance will feature a special class to celebrate the Tucker 48, 70 years after the vehicle went into production. Mark Lieberman will be a class judge, and pre-eminent automotive journalist and historian Ken Gross will be the chief class judge.

"We're going to have the Tin Goose, a bare Tucker chassis, and eight or nine other Tuckers," Gross says. "Most people have perhaps only seen one Tucker, not



a big gathering of these unusual-looking cars. It'll be memorable. Lots of people applied and wanted to bring their cars. I regret we just couldn't accommodate them all."

This year also marks the 30th anniversary of "Tucker: The Man and His Dream," which did its part to instill a certain perception of the Tucker story upon the world.

"Francis Coppola's movie dramatized the Tucker story, some 40 years after Tucker failed—and that's what people remember," Gross says. "The scene where the workers assemble a bunch of Tuckers and drive them to the courthouse to show the judge that Tucker was the real deal brings tears to people's eyes—and we hope to line up 'our' Tuckers across the ramp to replicate that moment." **AM**

by BASEM WASEF

Mercedes-Benz has a new **G-Wagen**, but its roots aren't lost to time



ORIGINAL





GANGSTERS

73





THIS
INAUGURAL
**460 SERIES
MODEL**
IS THE
EPITOME
OF “BEFORE
THEY WERE
FAMOUS”
INNOCENCE



74



Switches and controls were centrally positioned within easy reach by the driver. Rugged foam elements over bare metal characterized the early G-Wagen's weather-friendly construction.

1980 230G
(460 series, short wheelbase)

EST. COST WHEN NEW: \$26,000
EST. VALUE TODAY: \$18,000





G history



First-generation W460 models were extremely capable machines: 80 percent grades and 54 percent lateral tilts were doable, though it might take a bit of patience because of the mildly endowed engines.



From the start, the G-Class came in open-top variants, such as this 460 from 1979.



One of the more visible G-Classses: the series W460 Popemobile, circa 1980. Within the Plexiglass dome, His Holiness could enjoy a climate-controlled environment along with excellent outward visibility.

A Mercedes-Benz 280GE tackles the Paris-Dakar Rally in 1983; Jacky Ickx and Claude Brasseur emerged victorious after 6,200 brutal miles.



➔ **YOU WANT TO** hate it because, well, it's the ancestor of shiny city roamers helmed by celebrities who wouldn't be caught dead fording a river or climbing a trail. You also suspect it's raw and crude and agrarian. But the ill associations are entirely unwarranted. The 40-year-old origins of the Mercedes-Benz G-Class are about as legitimate as a four- (and sometimes six-) wheeled conveyance gets.

The 2019 G-Class took a drastic turn toward modernity with its independent front suspension and oh so slightly rounded corners. But it's a continuation of a throughline that originally sparked in the '70s thanks to a nudge from none other than the Shah of Iran, who presciently recognized the value of stripped-down, go-anywhere vehicles that lacked Range Rover-esque luxury pretensions. It also didn't hurt that he was a major Mercedes-Benz stakeholder.

Early G's aren't quite as agricultural as, say, early Land Rovers, which make John Deere tractors feel like interplanetary rocket ships. But they're close. Austria's daunting Schöckl mountain usually gets all the glory for the G-Class' rugged roots, but Southern France's sprawling Circuit du Château de Lastours is where Mercedes finessed much of the G's off-road skill sets; it was along those craggy trails and jagged hillclimbs that we experienced old and new G-Classses back to back.

First, getting behind the wheel of the proto G-Classses turned out to be a fortuitous cadence; after all, the athletic prowess of the modern 416-hp G 550 and 557-hp AMG G 63



is so elevated that following up with the ancient trucks would have required a complete reverse calibration of the ol' butt-o-meter. Turns out it's best to start slow and steady and get acquainted with the boxy ute by putting one foot in front of the other, learning to walk before running, and all those sorts of things.

Our first tester, a 1980 230G, is a naive-looking short-wheelbase (94.4 inches) example finished in a fetching shade of fire-engine red (not to be confused for the actual 230G fire truck). Riding on steelies and powered by a 2.3-liter four-cylinder gas engine, this inaugural 460 series

G is the epitome of “Before They Were Famous” innocence, from a time when a Geländewagen was a Geländewagen, a term that stuck around until 1998. From its plaid cloth seats to its hand-crank windows, rubberized steering wheel, and four-speed shift-it-yourself gearbox, this earliest G is the purest expression of the breed. Freed from superfluities such as air conditioning and catalytic converters, the 230 fires up with a quiet crank and gets on its way with unassuming ease.

Because it's unburdened by extras, the 102-hp powerplant feels adequate for its petite body. The shifter features long throws and feels rather mechanical in its operation, but it engages smoothly and cleanly. Piloting the little guy over hill and dale inspires aggressive driving despite the lack of driver aids: Because there's so little bodywork between you and the outside world, your spatial awareness feels extra strong, as though aided by a neural 360-degree camera. The organic relationship between the non-power-assist steering and the carbureted engine makes it thoughtlessly easy to thread the narrow tires through terrain, and the outstanding visibility breeds confidence. Damping is surprisingly compliant, and wheel travel is generous despite the non-independent front and rear axles; there's some light jostling over particularly uneven surfaces, but the ride is surprisingly plush. Through it all this compact 4x4 averts the modern trappings of power, weight, and complexity, offering a small, unassuming, and earnestly simple driving experience.

Moving one small step up the G-Wagen evolutionary ladder is like meeting an awkward middle child after



1985 230GE

(460 series, long wheelbase)

EST. COST WHEN NEW: \$46,000
EST. VALUE TODAY: \$25,000



↓
W463 series G-Wagens leapt forward in terms of cabin comfort and ride quality, but it would take the following generation to cross the Rubicon into full modernity.

being charmed by the bright-eyed baby. The five-door 1985 230GE gains fuel injection that's good for 125 hp. But mated to an automatic transmission and with a 112.2-inch wheelbase, the essential character of this rig feels markedly different. Sure, there's still the thin body panels and trademark letterboxed windshield, but there's also a slightly encumbered feeling due to the choking effect of the torque converter gearbox and its difficult-to-predict shift patterns. Overcome inertia and get it up to speed, and this G feels palpably more substantial than its short-wheelbase counterpart; its long wheelbase lends an air of stability and smoothness. But on steeper elevations and tight corners, it also feels less spry and eager to play along with the off-piste games. There's still a prevailing sense

1993 500GE

(463 series, long wheelbase)

EST. COST WHEN NEW: \$111,000
EST. VALUE TODAY: \$40,000



of purity, but it sags slightly under the weight of the layout: the rear seats, the cargo area, the family- (or troop-) friendliness of it all.

In the interest of gaining much-needed livability on the road and broader market appeal, the G-Wagen underwent an extreme makeover in 1990 with the introduction of the 463 series. The long-overdue second-generation G-Wagen ditched its part-time all-wheel drive for a permanent AWD setup while gaining a considerably more capable 5.0-liter V-8 producing 241 hp. Inside, the changes make it all but unrecognizable, save the familiar 16:9 windshield proportion, upright posture, and defiantly rectilinear ergonomics. Although pleated leather and burl veneers swathe the flat surfaces, familiar elements such as the dashboard-mounted grab handle still recall its humble progenitors. The body panels are thicker due to the addition of more substantial crash structures but don't intrude into the cabin like they do in later versions.

↓
The newest G is flush with plushness, but diehards can rest easy that its off-road capabilities are stronger than ever.

We plucked a fetchingly period-correct, aubergine-tinted 1993 500GE for a two-hour stint between the medieval French town of Carcassonne and Barcelona, and we didn't regret the decision. Although it can't match the 21st century refinement of the latest/greatest all-new model, this G feels less anachronistic than you might expect. Sure, the steering ratio is painfully slow, and its road-going demeanor makes it feel like it would be far happier tackling a trail than spinning the odometer over pavement. But compared to later models whose competitors were more evolved SUVs, this example from the early '90s proved easier than expected to live with. There's still plenty of perceptible road noise and wind howl, but there's also a more refined suspension and copious torque for high-speed cornering and easy-peasy passing. And don't forget, this G still occupies an era of innocence—it predates the advent of the AMG treatment, which introduced an incongruous element of performance that runs counter to the platform's off-road origins.

Going full circle to the completely reworked modern G-Class reveals a startlingly familiar soul despite changes to nearly everything except the headlamp nozzles, door handles, and spare-tire cover. And yes, the 2019 G-Class is ostensibly a superior vehicle. It manages both off-road abilities and on-road civility. But those markedly refined characteristics are nothing without the fundamentals that were established four decades prior. **AM**

17



2019 G 550
(464 series, long wheelbase)

EST. COST WHEN ON SALE IN LATE 2018:
\$128,000

THE
LONG-
OVERDUE
463 SERIES
CAME WITH
A PERMANENT
AWD SETUP
AND MORE
CAPABLE
5.0-LITER V-8
PRODUCING
241 HP.

CLASSIC

Still Dreaming

Car
connoisseur
**John
Staluppi**
just
sold
his
extensive
collection,
but
he's
far
from
finished

by RORY JURNECKA
photography by JADE NELSON

➤
**“We’re very
selective on
the cars here.”**

I don’t like any pieces of s***, excuse my language,” John Staluppi, a reasonable approximation of a sturdier Robert De Niro, says in his Brooklyn accent. “I’m not that much about history and all that stuff. I’m more about I want the car to look nice, drive nice.”



"You look at cars today, it's hard to tell if it's an Audi or a Mercedes other than having the big badges. ... If you look at these old cars, with the big bumpers and the chrome, they still have that sentimental value."

79



We're walking through an enthusiast's paradise that Staluppi, born in 1947, calls his Cars of Dreams, built into roughly half of a nondescript West Palm Beach, Florida, strip mall he purchased primarily to house his extensive collection of automobiles. A casual passerby has no idea of the four-wheeled treasures inside the roughly 60,000-square-foot space. With its Coney Island theme, accented by a Brooklyn Bridge and Manhattan skyline motif along the back wall, this isn't just a place to gawk at old cars—there's an entire town to explore.

Hit the boardwalk and play carnival games, or grab a bite to eat at a functioning Nathan's hot dog stand. Stroll along the museum's tree-lined streets, past the mock drive-in theater, prison, and fire station (complete with an actual LaFrance fire truck) and into the old-time Oldsmobile dealership, stocked with period-correct Olds models. A full-scale '50s-style diner, named after Staluppi's late dog, Dillinger, is open during the handful of charity events this place opens its doors for each year. This is his private wonderland, a world Staluppi has created to celebrate his love of cars and his childhood home.

Staluppi's dream was born of necessity. When he moved into his West Palm Beach estate, he quickly found there was one part of the home that didn't measure up. "I had a 10-car garage, but I said, 'This is not working,' and built an 18-car garage for my house," Staluppi says. "I kept packing cars in, and every time I wanted to go for a ride in a car, I'd have to move five cars just to get to it."

Once he moved his cars out of the garage and into the museum, he kept packing them in, eventually accumulating roughly 150 in all. But by the end of the week, just a handful will remain. Staluppi is selling nearly the entire shebang—145 cars—at the annual Barrett-Jackson Palm Beach auction. Today, the Barrett-Jackson crew is on hand to tag, prep, and ultimately move each car from this plush townscape to the local fairgrounds where the auction will occur. The smell of exhaust hangs in the air from cars starting and rolling out of the massive building onto waiting transport trailers. When it's all said and done, Staluppi's cars will generate \$13.96 million at auction, including buyer's premium, typically around 10 percent. Staluppi's cut will be the hammer price, minus Barrett-Jackson's listing fees and seller's premium of 8 percent (if you do the math, that's a little more than \$1 million). He's still left with a huge chunk of change, the kind of money Staluppi once only dreamed of earning.



BEST OF SALE

Barrett-Jackson

Palm Beach 2018, April 12-15

John Staluppi Cars of Dreams



↑
John Staluppi is an active Barrett-Jackson bidder and attends nearly every auction.



In his teenage days, Staluppi worked 9-to-5 as a mechanic at a Brooklyn-based Chevrolet dealer, doing his share of drag racing on the side with cars he built himself. "When I was at Chevrolet, I worked on all the high-performance cars," he recalls. "The 327 had just come out, then in '65 the 396 and the 454s came out. So I really got into the muscle cars—that was really my era."

With some financial help from his working-class parents, he went on to purchase a small gas station, then a Honda dealership back when the Japanese company's only products were motorcycles. Staluppi began adding Honda dealers, filling his showrooms



with little N600 micro sedans when Honda offered cars for U.S. sale. His timing couldn't have been better. When the aftershocks of the 1973-74 OPEC oil embargo led to higher gas prices, Honda's fuel-efficient cars and motorcycles started flying out of Staluppi's showrooms. The windfall enabled him to expand into Oldsmobile and Nissan dealerships. Although his empire has shrunk since its peak at 40 dealerships, Staluppi says the family business (his son owns franchises in Las Vegas) still constitutes the third-largest private dealership group in the country.

Although sales of contemporary cars have long buttered Staluppi's bread, they don't do much for him. "Classic cars just have the look," he insists. "You look at cars today, it's hard to tell if it's an Audi or a Mercedes other than having the big badges. There aren't a lot of convertibles out there today; most cars are four doors. If you look at these old cars, with the big bumpers and the chrome, they still have that sentimental value."



1970 Plymouth Superbird
Sold for: \$286,000

Lots of Superbirds were driven hard and put away wet when they were just "used cars," but this example seems to have been spared that sort of misery. The original numbers-matching 440-cubic-inch six-barrel engine and 727 Torqueflite transmission are installed, and the nose cone, often replaced with an aftermarket one due to damage, is factory original.

1969 Pontiac GTO Judge Ram Air IV
Sold for: \$178,200

Subjected to a full frame-off restoration and powertrain rebuild, this documented, factory-produced Judge is one of just 549 built with the desirable Ram Air IV engine and Muncie M21 four-speed, short-ratio manual gearbox. Said to be factory-correct down to the little details—like GM-branded hoses—this surely must be one of the best available, hence the strong sale price.



THIS NEW
COLLECTION IS
GOING TO HAVE
HARDTOPS
AND STATION
WAGONS—I
USED TO LOVE
THE OLD
WOODIES.

That is why, despite selling nearly every car from his collection with its focus on American convertibles primarily from the 1940s to 1960s, this space will no doubt be packed with cars again in the not too distant future. This is the second time Staluppi has sold an enormous grouping of vehicles to fixate on a new theme. Although the focus will remain on American iron, he plans some significant changes.

"I'm not a big foreign car guy," he says. "Ferraris and all that, I had a couple of them. ... They don't do nothin' for me. Maybe I would buy some old Rolls-Royces or the old Bentleys. I've got to find the right ones, with the tires on the fenders. This new collection is going to have hardtops and station wagons—I used to love the old Woodies. This time we're going to do a lot more restomods. I like that they have fuel injection; carburetors are a pain in the ass. We have a few cars that weren't started for a long time and the carburetors were all gummed up ... oh my god."

Even though he's been here, done this before, Staluppi is still sentimental about selling the collection he spent several years building. As he wanders the rows of vehicles, checking in with Barrett-Jackson's team on its progress, it's apparent this is a big life event.

"I was really getting melancholy the other night," Staluppi admits. "Some people sell their cars because they need the money. I just wanted to have a change. But as I'm going through it, I'm thinking, 'What am I doing?' If the place was bigger, I'd just go out and buy another 150 cars and have 300 cars. But I don't want to just have 300 cars in a warehouse. I want it to look nice."

After a lifetime of buying and selling for a living and a hobby, there is at least one car, his first Corvette, Staluppi refuses to part with. Or rather, he won't sell it again.

"When I was still a mechanic at the Chevy dealer, they got this black '62 Corvette in, and I was going crazy," he says. "I went to my father and said, 'I really want this car. You've gotta help me out.' He took out a second mortgage on the house 'cause we didn't have a lot of money. It was \$3,100, and the house was only worth \$18,000. I got the Corvette, and it was the first really new Corvette I had." By the end of the '60s, Staluppi sold the Corvette, but more recently, his then-99-year-old father told him, "Johnny, when your mother died, I was cleaning out some stuff, and I found the registration for your first Corvette."

"I said, 'You've got to be kidding me!' I tracked down the car in Michigan and bought it," Staluppi says with an ear-to-ear grin.



**1957 BMW
Isetta 300**
Sold for: \$57,200

Isettas are probably best known in the U.S. thanks to their association with television character Steve Urkel from the '90s sitcom "Family Matters," but as classic microcars gain traction in the marketplace, their values are on the rise. An outlier in the American-centric Staluppi collection, this Isetta 300 seats two and has a rear-mounted 0.3-liter engine. This was fair market value for a nicely restored car.



**1957 Cadillac
Eldorado Biarritz**
Sold for: \$170,500

Staluppi had a hard time parting with this one, and it is easy to see why. The original 365-cubic-inch V-8 sits underhood, and the rest of the car was treated to a cosmetic restoration including 24-karat-gold-plated emblems. With plenty of ownership history and documentation on the car, this one will undoubtedly be tough to replace. You couldn't restore this Cadillac to this level for the price paid.



1915 Ford Model T Circus Wagon

Sold for: \$110,000

For the collector who has everything, may we suggest this very early circus wagon? Said to have appeared in Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus events, the wagon has been treated to a better-than-original restoration with gold-plated trim, solid brass cage bars, and Amish-made wooden spoke wheels. If you wanted one, here it was.



1962 Chevrolet Corvette Convertible (Not for sale)

You never forget your first Corvette, or at least John Staluppi didn't. After making the mistake of selling the car once, the opportunity to buy it back presented itself. Staluppi took it and ran. This one won't escape his possession again.

↑
Corvettes loom large in John Staluppi's legend. He sold 17 of them at this single auction and bought one more for charity.

These days, the collector has branched out from automotive ventures into commissioning some of the fastest luxury yachts in the world. One of those creations, a 140-foot boat named *The World Is Not Enough* (all of Staluppi's boats are 007-themed), is capable of hitting some 80 mph on open water. But Staluppi isn't finished tinkering with cars. His latest project is a 1958 Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz convertible he plans to modify.

"I decided I want to put four-wheel drive in the car and also a fuel-injection motor," he says. "So I bought a used Escalade, and a guy is putting the car on the Escalade chassis. I've got a home in the mountains, and I want a car that I can drive there with four-wheel drive. It'll be the only '58 Cadillac with four-wheel drive!"

There will be plenty more cars to come and plenty more dreams worth chasing—and perhaps, eventually, yet another big auction when Staluppi once again feels a change is in order. **AM**

1969 Chevrolet Camaro Indy Pace Car Convertible

Sold for: \$110,000

1969 was a unique year in Camaro history, with sporty, restyled sheet metal that lasted for just this single model year. This Indy Pace Car edition (Z11 package) includes the rear spoiler, rally wheels, and a ducted hood. The car is also equipped with the RS package and a 396-cubic-inch V-8 with four-speed manual transmission. An investment-grade Camaro at a fair price.



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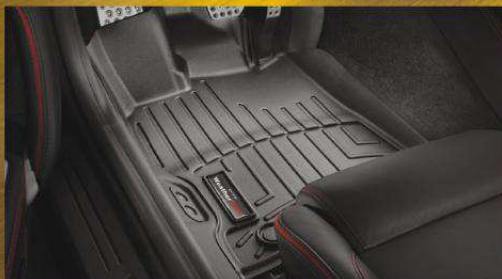
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GROOMS
TOMORROW'S
AUTOMOTIVE
ARTISANS



by AARON GOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM WALKER





WHERE WILL WE find the next generation of automotive restorers? It's easy to picture an eager young apprentice learning at the knee of a grizzled old panel-beater, and indeed that does still happen. But an increasing number of these future artisans come from a small liberal arts college on the windswept Kansas plain—and many of them are eagerly snapped up by some of the country's finest restoration shops.

Industry pundits may bemoan the apparent lack of interest in cars among young people, but a quick drive through the McPherson College parking lot proves car culture is alive and well. And we're not just talking about tuner cars and modern metal—you'll find students driving classic Mopars, Model Ts, International Harvester pickups, and everything in between.

Among the jobs we saw in progress at this school an hour north of Wichita: a 1906 Cadillac engine on the rebuild bench, a 1917 Willys-Knight with a sleeve-valve engine being readied for the road, and a 1953 Mercedes-Benz 300S Cabriolet in the early stages of a restoration that will eventually take it to Pebble Beach. Our spring visit coincided with the presentation of senior projects, which included a 1969 Corvette chassis meticulously restored to National Corvette Restorers Society standards, right down to the factory-correct paint overspray on the bell housing. One student lectured on the legacy of the Duesenberg brothers while others recounted their experience hand-building new panels for a collision-damaged Camaro.





**“I LIKE
TO EXPOSE
THEM TO THE
WORK IN THE
CHRONOLOGICAL
WAY IT WAS
DONE FROM THE
BEGINNING.”**

←
McPherson students show an unexpected enthusiasm for brass-era cars like this 1917 Willys-Knight. The holistic education they receive is essential in restoring such classics.

The auto restoration program at McPherson began in 1976 when local businessman Gaines “Smokey” Billue donated his 125-car collection to the school in the hopes it could raise the next generation of automotive restorers. Initially established as a two-year program, McPherson has used grants and donations from Mercedes to expand the program to four years (in 2003) and from the likes of Jay Leno to fund scholarships. Today, McPherson says it offers the only bachelor’s degree in automotive restoration, with concentrations in restoration technology, management, communications, history, and design.

“After this program, you have the knowledge to take a car from basket case to fully restored,” senior William Strickler says. “You can do every step of that process.”

What separates McPherson’s auto restoration curriculum from a tech school? The inclusion of a full raft of liberal arts courses is a major component, but what really stands out is the enthusiasm and respect shown for automotive history.



The program concentrates on cars built before 1970, and a surprising number of students have developed a passion for cars as far back as the brass era.

“If they’re interested in tuners, which is not that uncommon here, they end up gaining an appreciation for the Model T and the Model A,” says Garrick Green, who teaches woodwork. “Not that they’re technically wonderful cars, but they’re technically significant. They mark significant points in automotive history where something has changed.”

History is a fundamental element regardless of the task at hand. “Whether you’re taking drivetrain or engine rebuilding, they’re going to teach you history,” Davis Bint, a third-year student, says. “If you’re coming to school for classic cars, you should understand the emphasis of what history does for them.”

Technical schools tend to concentrate on modern repair methods; McPherson, however, teaches the techniques needed to work on older vehicles. Students in the basic engine rebuilding course overhaul a small-block Chevrolet V-8. “You can learn all the fundamentals on that engine,” Curt Goodwin, an engine professor, says. In the advanced class, they move on to the Model A engine, which Goodwin calls “the small-block Chevy of the past.” McPherson also offers a class on Babbitt bearings, which are used on antique engines and are poured as molten metal directly into the block.



“I didn’t expect the depth we go into,” Bint says. “We cover important steps and important names—guys in the 1800s patenting things that are still used on cars.” Bint, like many of the students we spoke with, sees the positive influence this can have on his career. “You can speak fluently to someone at Pebble Beach who has a one-off Duesenberg,” he says. “You understand the car and know the history. It does a lot more for you in the car world than, ‘Oh, that’s a pretty Duesenberg.’”

McPherson delves not only into the history of the automobile but also the history of the processes used to build it. Woodworking students start off by hand-building a mallet from blocks of wood. Basic machining classes use World War II-surplus South Bend lathes from Boeing's Wichita factory; sheetmetal students form 3-D teardrops from flat metal.

"I like to expose them to the work in the chronological way it was done from the beginning," sheetmetal professor Ed Barr says. "Before power hammers, [metal workers] were creating crown panels on flat, clean pieces of steel, banging the metal into shot bags or stumps. So our first shaping exercise is in that mode.

"The work we're doing here is very, very specialized," he continues. "We're using techniques that are completely archaic, like lead solder. It takes a lot more understanding of what is happening in the metal and how to control that metal. It's good to know these techniques because sometimes people will insist that cars are restored using the original methods."

Those antiquated techniques aren't just used for antiquated restorations, though. "We practice a particular skill, like cutting dovetails," Green says. "Is it all about the dovetails? No, it's about accurate marking, layout, doing precise work with a good, sharp chisel. Those are the kind of things that are transferable to any project."

Michael Dudley, who teaches the interior trim class, also stresses the importance of history. "The evolution of materials and trim is a big topic," he says, "because students need to be able to look at a car and say, 'This [material] wasn't used then. That's too early.'"



↑
Using hand tools, students at McPherson College learn period-correct methods of restoration and repair.



Although many of the students who come to McPherson's Auto Restoration program are lifelong gearheads, most are inexperienced in some aspects of auto restoration, and a few have no car experience.

"One student had a master's degree in music," Goodwin says. "He knew zero about cars when he started, but he was like a sponge. He was one of my better students—he just soaked it up. That's the kind of kids we get here. They're really hungry. They ask good questions. They're curious. If they're willing to learn, we'll spend the time."

Barr also appreciates students who come in with a clean slate. "They don't have any bad habits coming in," he says, "and they are bright-eyed and eager to learn."

Nearly all of the instructors have master's degrees, and all but one are alumni of the program. "All of the professors are wonderful," third-year student Paige Milem says. "They go above and beyond their duties. Curt, the engine professor, has come up here a couple


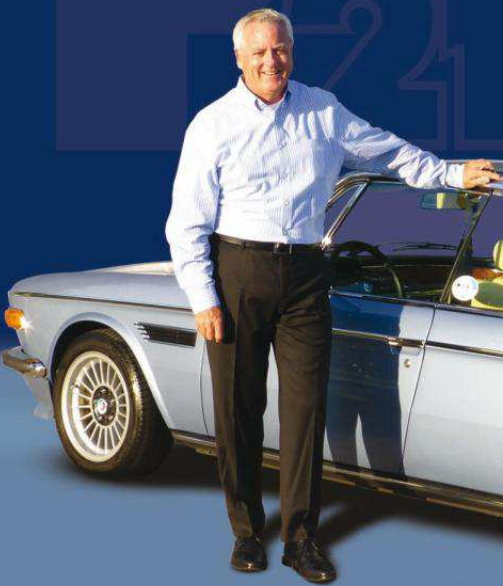

of weekends and stayed past 10 p.m. helping me get my engine together. They are incredible people. And the students here are just the same.”

Although the program aims to give them a broad base of skills, students often find themselves specializing in areas they initially had no interest in.

“I had no experience with upholstery,” Strickler says. “I came into the Intro to Trim class and learned everything. I’m in advanced trim this semester, and I did an entire interior for my 1970 F-350 Crew Cab. I did what a 1970 King Ranch would have looked like, with a dark tobacco vinyl for the bolsters and a tight-woven tan and dark brown cloth for the centers.”

For some students, forays into a new topic are the pathways to a career. Senior Tim Kortevin served an internship at the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Irvine, California, and has since been offered a job after graduation.






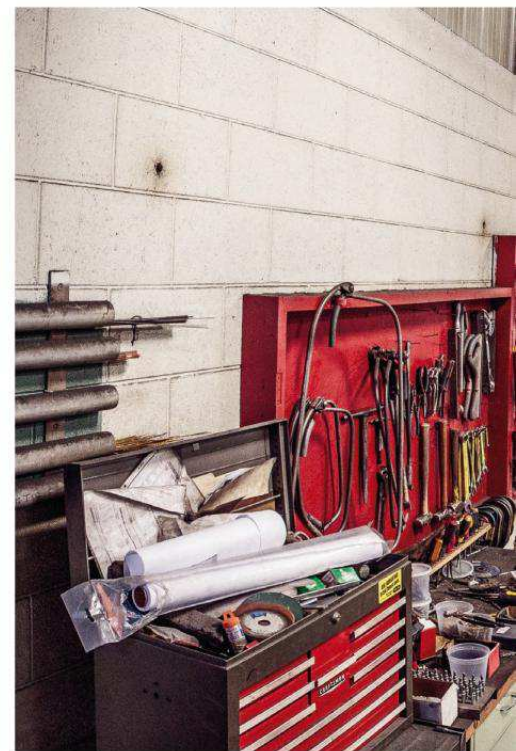
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"I never had any experience [with interior trim] in the past," he says. "I came in here with mechanical experience and figured I might want to build engines. I had no idea that I would want to do upholstery." As part of his internship, Kortevin restored a large portion of the interior of a Gullwing, including both front seats. This year, his interior—along with the rest of the car—will go to Pebble Beach.

The Mercedes-Benz Center has hired several McPherson graduates, as have the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles and Paul Russell and Company, a Massachusetts restoration house with a long list of The Quail, Pebble Beach, and Amelia Island winners to its name. Chris Hammond, a restoration technician who specializes in electrical systems for Paul Russell, graduated from McPherson in 2003.

"There's an aspect of dedication to what they are doing," Hammond says of young McPherson grads. "They tend to be dedicated, they work the hours they need to, they take direction well, and they are good team players. That's important on a big project, which needs a lot of collaboration."

McPherson students also graduate with a well-rounded education. "A lot of the restoration shops we're talking to, they like that our students are broadly educated," Green says. "We can't provide a 20-year veteran, but we can



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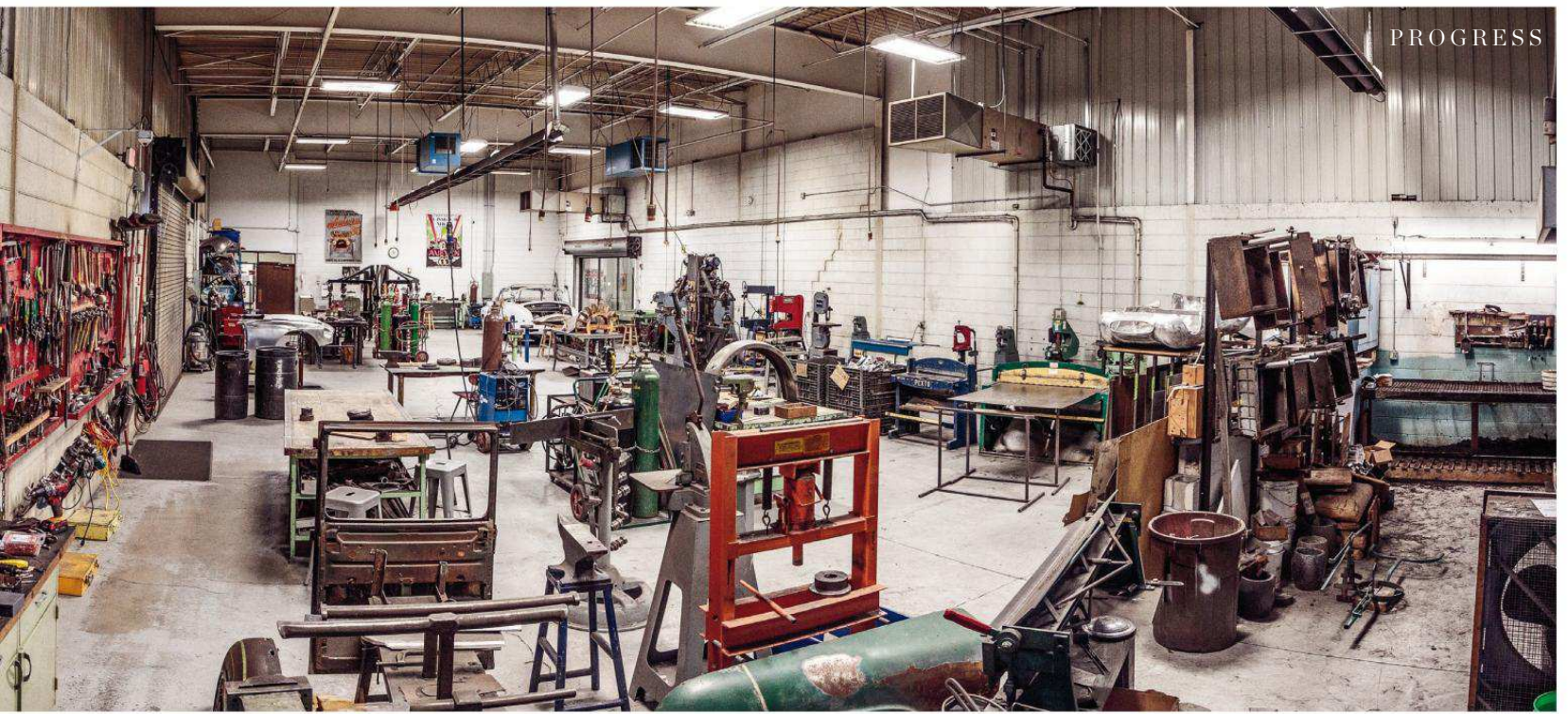
provide someone who understands the implications of automobiles in our society and has a good worth ethic."

Alex Heikamp, a graduating senior who aspires to own a Jaguar restoration shop, worked on the NCRS restoration of the 1969 Corvette chassis as his senior project. "When I came here, I didn't really know anything about cars," he says. "I rebuilt a few engines with my friends, but I'd never really dug deep into the theory. The school has really helped open my eyes."

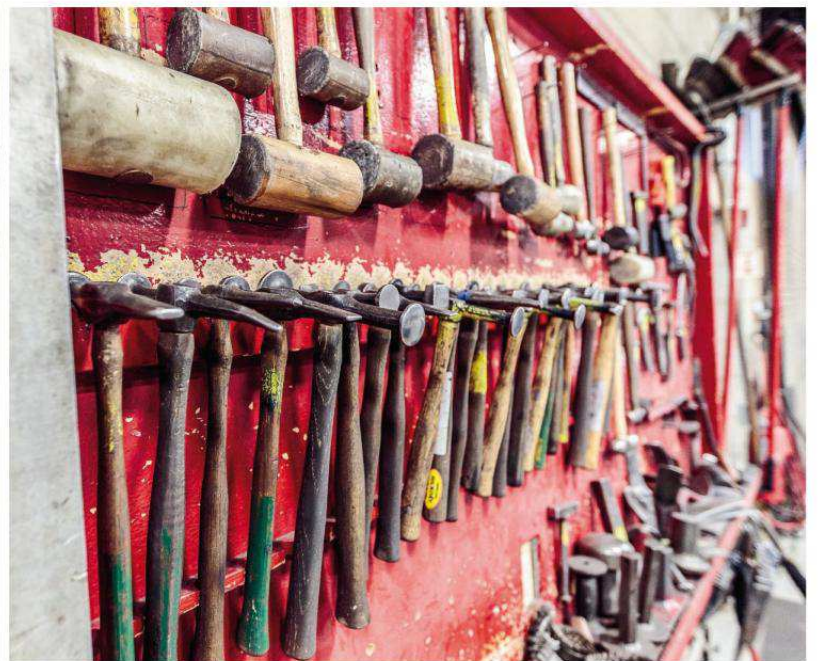
"I came here to expand my horizons," adds Chris Hughes, Heikamp's partner on the Corvette. "What coming here has taught me is a wide array, from interior to paint and metalwork and engines, everything about every aspect of a restoration. You're not going to find a community of young people that are as universally interested in cars as you'll find here."

Goodwin, the engine professor, agrees. "I'm humbled by these students every day," he says. "They're smart, and they're going to do great things."

In many cases, they already have. **AM**



"You're not going to find a community of young people that are as universally interested in cars as you'll find here."





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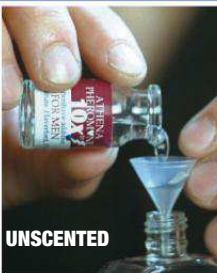
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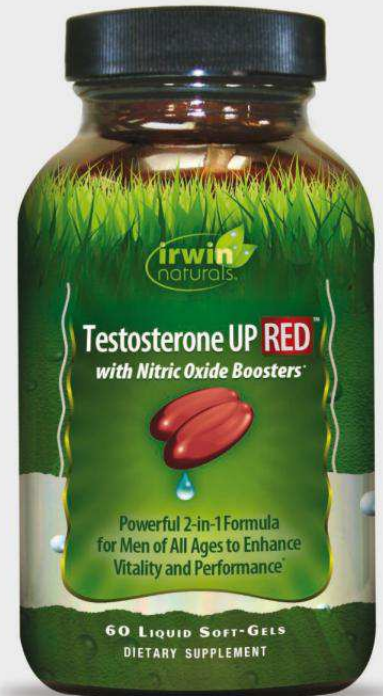
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by RORY JURNECKA

DEREK HILL IS the son of America's first Formula 1 world champion, Phil Hill. Like his father, he is a California native who cut his teeth racing sports cars before heading to Europe to pursue a career in open-wheel racing. Today, Hill stays active on the track in vintage racing events, including the Goodwood Revival, and also participates in many shows, including Rév Auto (revauto.org), which he co-founded. We caught up with Hill, 43, en route to Italy, where he was set to drive a classic Alfa Romeo in the 2018 Mille Miglia.

Last decade, you raced in Formula 3000 in Europe. What was your experience climbing the racing ladder abroad?

DH: Racing in Europe was as exciting and challenging as it gets. The magnificent circuits like Spa, Monza, Silverstone, and Monaco, just to name a few, were sensational to drive on. The highlight was racing my first full season of Formula 3000 with a French team, [paired with] Sébastien Bourdais, who was in his second season. If there was ever the ultimate racing school, I was immersed in it. It was so extremely challenging and demanded such a high level of mental focus, physical fitness, and a level of grit I can't imagine I'd have gotten anywhere else.

Your father was the first American F1 champion. Was that helpful or burdensome to you as an aspiring racer?

DH: Being the son of a world champion opened doors, got conversations started, and helped me raise the finances I needed to keep climbing the ranks. Being the "son of" was the biggest reason I ever became a racer, anyway, having been exposed to that world and seeking the thrill and the challenge of it like my father had done. However, I soon realized that it's a far greater advantage to come from deep family wealth or corporate connections than being a son of a famous driver. I have zero regrets how things turned out. I'm just very grateful I got to race as much as I did and got to continue on in historic racing in a very meaningful way.

Inside Track, the book featuring Phil's photography from his racing days, is out now. What does it mean to see that project completed?

DH: *Inside Track* is truly a beautiful three-volume work of art. My father was an exceptional person, and the fact he pursued a hobby of photography during his career was such a gift, it turns out. We had more than 1,000 images on 35mm color Kodachrome to sort through. Thankfully, the book project started years before he passed away, so he was able to go through each image and offer up so much detail for every image.

That must have required some commitment ...

DH: It took us years to compile all the interviews and sort through the family archive to get all the accompanying letters, documents, photos, etc., to make it a very

thorough and complete homage to his incredible life as a racing driver. It was a massive team effort [with Doug Nye and Steve Dawson], and I still can't believe it's done.

You've been Master of Ceremonies at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance for several years now; what's your favorite part of the role?

DH: Pebble Beach has been a story weaving through my whole life, starting as young as I can remember. I never even imagined being the Master of Ceremonies, but as I continued to stay involved over the years, it was a position that naturally opened up for me. My favorite part is getting to have one of the best seats in the house right in front of the ramp.

It is notoriously difficult for a postwar car to win Best of Show at Pebble. Do you see that changing over the next decade?

DH: Well, we saw it a couple of years ago, and I don't doubt we'll see it again soon. There is just something about the prewar era that oozes elegance. What we are going through is a transition to how we interpret the word *elegance*, which is all about people's perception. As generations change in the Concours world, so do our tastes.

You're the rare enthusiast who really embraces both classic and contemporary cars. What can designers of future cars learn from vintage cars?

DH: The cars of the past are such sensory vehicles—the way they look, drive, feel, and the way they sound. Just like any art form, stylistic design in many of the classics was just off the charts. In a world where cars are being built around fuel efficiency targets and with all the safety regulations, designers only have to look back to the past to find inspiration for the subtle styling cues that keep a brand unique and on point. It's fun to see these subtleties in modern cars, like the Bugatti Chiron.

What cars are in your garage?

DH: My father was a collector of early American classics, and we ended up keeping a few of them. In fact, two of them, a 1918 Packard Town Car and a 1931 Pierce-Arrow, have been in our family since new. I have a diverse and growing list I'd like to own, including a '50s Maserati A6GCS, a '73 Porsche 911 RS, a '74 BMW 3.0CS, a Series II or III Land Rover, an Alfa Romeo 1750 Berlina ... this list can go on for another page. For now, I'm driving an Alfa Romeo Stelvio, which, for a family man, fits the bill on many levels.

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